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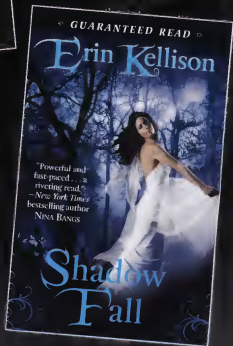
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NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND

It was in Chinatown, oddly enough, that I discovered Spanish horror – a copy of Jaime Balaguer's *The Nameless*. At the time, about a decade ago, I'd developed the habit of making bi-weekly pilgrimages to the Asian shopping district downtown to explore a world of cinema I didn't have access to anywhere else. This was before YouTube, video-on-demand downloads, torrents, many of the online stores specializing in foreign films and most of the film geek sites that now post foreign movie trailers the day they're released. The Internet Movie Database (IMDb) did exist back then, however, and I would literally spend entire evenings sourcing into an upcoming projects, learning about obscure releases by my favorite genre filmmakers, reading trailers and following links so far down the horror net rabbit hole that, by the time I'd discovered Clint Howard had a cameo in *Lap-ochau 2* as "Jaurist," I couldn't remember what the hell had led me there in the first place. (Probably nothing good.)

I loved that sense of discovery, the thrill of the hunt, the anticipation of seeing something... different. So with a list of IMDb-sourced titles in hand, I'd plunge into the bins in Chinatown. Thanks to VCDs (movies compressed onto compact discs), import DVDs, and the region-free player I scored, I became privy to the gleeful cinematic transgressions of Takashi Miike, a fantastic morbid comedy from Korea called *The Quiet Family* (which Miike later remade as *The Happiness of the Katakazis*), a frightening Japanese ghost movie called *New Blood*, the astonishingly original *Uzumaki* and all kinds of J-horror before anyone I knew was calling it "J-horror." (Taking a chance on the VCD with the pale ghost boy on the box actually led directly to my first *Rue Morgue* cover story, on Ju-on.)

The store owners were usually puzzled by the white guy with so many questions about subtitles and region coding. But if I was somewhat of a stranger in a strange land, then *The Nameless* was a foreign object among foreign objects – something I picked up simply because it seemed so bizarre: a Japanese release of a Spanish movie based on a British book (by Ramsey Campbell). It didn't disappoint, either – it was atmospheric, creepy and very unforgetting. I took note of the guy who made it, one Jaime Balaguer. The IMDb told me it was his first feature. I began to wonder what else Spain had to offer.

Like tape traders before me, and Blu-ray/DVD collectors before them, I was driven to go beyond the easily accessible by a never-ending appetite for fresh thrills and chills. I still have that hunger, and night now Spanish horror is filling the void. It's the respite from Hollywood remakes that I need, a wave of horror movies that are intelligent, well-made, suspenseful, scary and – brace yourself – full of original ideas. In compensation, most of the stuff opening in theatres here is made via a policy of reduce (yep, by sticking to formula), reuse (ideas that were popular the first time around), recycle (franchises with a proven track record). I just know there's a special circle of hell reserved for slasher remake stylist Michael Bay, and it's filled with rabid lava-sharks.

As you'll read in the cover story, this new bunch of Spanish filmmakers grew up watching the same genre classics on video as their American counterparts, and they show their influences proudly. The (REC) series is a perfect example of combining elements from '70s and '80s horror classics, adding some unique cultural flavour (Catholic overtones abound) and creating something new. (REC) 2 proves that a sequel can significantly enrich a tale, instead of simply rehashing it.

Much of the appeal of not just the (REC) movies, but New Spanish Horror in general, is the sense of mystery. Many revolve around uncovering hideous events of the past and investigating the unexplained. Even visually, they're steeped in darkness, with things emerging from the shadows, and people disappearing into them. Balaguer's films, in particular, revel in the mark in a way that North American cinema does not (he actually made a film called *Darkness for Christakes*). Consider the North American re-edit of that film, the half-decade delay in releasing the upcoming *Frágil* and the six years it took for *The Nameless* to finally earn an DVD-only release, and it's clear North American distributors don't know what to do with these films.

Well, we do.

These releases are being artistically driven by unfamiliarity (fear of the unknown), which is diametrically opposed to the business of horror being driven by the familiar (something you can bank on). Luckily, it's easier now more than ever for us line to push things in the right direction, by investigating, sourcing and celebrating the work that deserves it. It means taking a more active role in your genre consumption, but isn't the effort more rewarding than, say, sitting the 676th online rant demanding something more original than the latest slasher remake?



Horror and Culture & Entertainment

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Rue Morgue #102 is dedicated to Ronnie James Dio. R.I.P.

COVER (REC) 2

Designed by Gary Pullen

Continued

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Dave
Alex

dave@rue-morgue.com

POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



I'M SENDING YOU A PHOTO of a little project that we have done just recently in homage to my absolute favourite magazine... *Rue Morgue*! The shot was taken by my great friend, Miss Colleen Farrell!

RICHARD CARDINAL — MONTREAL, QUEBEC

IT'S BEEN FOUR YEARS of unconditional love for your magazine. I've tried every horror mag out there and I am positive that *Rue Morgue* is not only the best, but the most complete and exhaustive printed work on all levels of horror. But today I'm sad. *RM101* represented my first total departure from your beautiful magazine. It could not care less about melodramatic '80s cheese rocker Danzig. *True Blood* is a better *Twilight*, but it certainly does not deserve more attention than it already has. I saw *Survival of the Dead* in Montreal a year ago and I must say that it really disappointed me (though the interview was great). If I was not a subscriber, I would have definitely never have bought this one. I can't wait for the next issue to erase this bad dream!

ROBERT P. — MONTREAL, QUEBEC

RUE MORGUE IS MY FAVOURITE monthly publication and I haven't missed an issue in over four years. Since taking over, Dave has unfailingly steered this ship in the right direction and I honestly believe it gets better with each issue. I wanted to give the mighty Feedback some much deserved kudos for his outrageously entertaining and deliciously well-written Romero article in the latest issue! I can only hope he does more features in the future for he certainly has a deft hand when conveying an amiable hang session with an artist, without sacrificing one iota of either purpose or relevance. I'll temper my praise with one gripe, so as not to come off like some mewling fanboy. I have never had a prob-

lem with the writing of Lisa Ladouceur, but her memo-ram to the mighty Petrus T. Skeele was beyond offensive to me as a lifelong fan of his work. It came off as flippant, like some assignment she was saddled with and had no interest in. Regardless of what is thought of his music and legacy, he deserved better than that.

**MATT RINES (A.K.A. SHLOGGS)
— MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA**

UNHOLY MOTHER OF SATAN! I just finished reading Trevor's article on Danzig, and let me just say that I am blown away. As a long-time Danzig fan I have read almost every interview he has done. This is by far one of the best. It was like Trevor was speaking on behalf of Danzig fans and not as some lame interviewer. I've never written to any magazine or publication before but I felt that I had to. I enthusiastically applaud *Rue Morgue* and, of course, Trevor. You guys make my life worth living!

KONSTANTINOS — TORONTO, ONTARIO

ON PAGE 64 OF RM101, Lisa Ladouceur refers to Type O Negative as "comfy" and "cheerful." I'm sorry but I just can't let this one go. These remarks are made in the same issue as an interview, photo shoot and cover shot of one Glenn Danzig. Compared to Danzig, Type O Negative is sucking Beethoven, okay?

**CHRIS MCKEEVER
— NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

RELATED CONGRATULATIONS on your 100th issue. Truly a milestone worth celebrating in this age of declining circulation. Not too interested in Glenn Danzig's brand of Satan-led black metal music or its offshoots, though. Some of his Verotik horror comics were pretty far out there. (Anyone remember *Grab Girl*)? Seems a stretch for a cover story, though. A far better cover story would have been Canada's own *Splice*, Canadian actor, director, special effects and location all spell a perfect fit for Canada's pre-eminent horror media publication. What gives? *Fangoria* just did a splashy cover story. Now, I have never heard of one man editing two competing magazines at the same time as does the ubiquitous Chris Alexander. Surely a conflict of interest question must be raised. I hope this arrangement works out well for both publications. In the case of *Splice*, *Rue Morgue* should have had the scoop first. I would be interested to hear the reasoning behind your almost complete lack of coverage on this high-profile genre bender.

GARY KIMBER — PICKERING, ONTARIO

[You'll be happy to know that there's plenty of *Splice* coverage at *rue-morgue.com*, as well as a review in this issue. Also, please see the *Rue Morgue* masthead to clear up your Editor-in-Chief conflict of interest question.]

LOVE THE 100TH ISSUE! Seriously, when can we buy a full-size wall poster of the cover? However, reading the "Top Earning Movies" section made me sick to my stomach. Once again, even more proof that popular culture is slowly killing off my favourite genre. *Twilight* gets number four? Really? How is this considered part of our genre, anyway? Last I checked vampires don't "like," let alone, "love" humans, nor do they sparkle in sunlight. What happened to the bloodthirsty vampires I used to love watching? It's actually come to the point that I hate vampires, and everything to do with them.

EL WRAY — ADDRESS WITHHELD

I WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW that I have been a huge fan of your magazine for about three years, and I devour each issue. I want to thank you for putting together such a gruesomely fantastic 100th issue, and including an interview with one of my idols R.L. Stine. I've been such an obsessed fan of his for many years and I'm hoping your article will make many '90 kids remember his books and smile! Thank you to the staff for working so hard to put out a legitimate and trustworthy horror entertainment mag. I am salivating for the next issue.

**SARAH "LITTLE MONSTER" QUEEN
— TRENTON, MICHIGAN**

I'M WRITING IN RESPONSE to *RM99*'s inclusion of *Card Clover's Man, Woman and Chosenews* as your "Classic Cut." I found it interesting that your writer did not point out that readers have to look past Clover's numerous factual errors regarding the films themselves. For instance, on page 35, she claims that *Halfway* is her top victim is stabbed repeatedly, with her blood filling the pool. Um, no, the nurse in question is accented to death. Clover then claims that in *The Exorcist*, Father Karras falls out Regan's window to his death, "presumably by the force of the devil's entry." What? Karras clearly leaps out the window of his own free will, seeking to destroy the demon. By the time Clover refers to *Evil Dead's Necronomicon* as a "videotape" on page 97, it's hard to take much of what she says seriously. I agree that the book is a landmark for gender studies, but as a horror reference book, it leaves a bit to be desired.

**AARON "DR. AC" CHRISTENSEN
— CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

WE ENCOURAGE READERS TO SEND THEIR COMMENTS VIA MAIL OR EMAIL. LETTERS MAY BE EDITED FOR LENGTH AND/OR CONTENT. PLEASE SEND TO: info@rue-morgue.com OR:

POST MORTEM

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Headlines



NEWS HIGHLIGHTS & HORROR HAPPENINGS

FANTASIA 2010 SPOTLIGHTS STUART GORDON, KEN RUSSELL AND EXTREME SERBIA

In 1996, the first Fantasia Film Festival was hardly a blip on the radar. A lot has changed in the last fourteen years; now one of the most important genre festivals in the world, the 2009 event saw ticket sales soar upwards of 90,000, with screenings of more than 200 films from across the globe. This year's festival, scheduled for July 8 to 28 in Montreal, features some seriously boundary-pushing international horror.

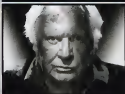
As per usual, Fantasia's programming will feature a number of premieres and classic fright flicks. This year, besides movies, horror aficionados can look forward to a staging of Stuart Gordon's one-man play *Nevermore: An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe*, starring Jeffrey Combs. Gordon and Combs will also be on hand to host a special 25th anniversary screening of an uncut 35mm print of *Re-Animator*.

Another of the fest's tentpole events will be the presentation of a lifetime achievement award to controversial auteur Ken Russell. On the night of the ceremony, the festival will screen a rare 35mm print of Russell's subversive classic *The Devils*, which has yet to be released on DVD.

"*The Devils* remains one of the most assaulting and controversial films ever made," says Fantasia co-director Mitch Davis. "All these years later, its studio is still afraid of it—and this is the studio that released *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Exorcist*. It's absolutely terrifying, and gripping beyond words. There's never been a film like it."

Fantasia 2010 will also see the world premiere of Frank Henenlotter and Jimmy Mison's years-in-the-making documentary *Herschell Gordon Lewis: The Godfather of Gore*. The screening will be hosted by Lewis, Henenlotter, Mison and producer Mike Vraney, and closed down with a showing of a rare 35mm print of Lewis' classic, *Blood Feast*.

Other world premieres include the *I Spit on Your Grave* remake and David Rhyne's *Wound*. Christopher Smith's bubonic plague and



Horror international: (clockwise from left) A Serbian Film, *Re-Animator*, and lifetime achievement award recipient Ken Russell

black magic epic *Black Death* will make its international debut at Fantasia, as will the Eli Roth-produced religious horror film *The Last Exorcism*, the French survivalist creature feature *The Pack*, the Greek zombie film *Evil in the Time of Heroes* and the Thai horror anthology film *Phobia 2*. This year's other premieres include Eli Craig's hillbilly slasher send-up *Tucker & Dale vs. Evil*, Neil Marshall's Roman legion chase film *Commodus*, Simon Rumley's grueling *Red White & Blue*, Yoshihiro Nishimura's gory superhero spoof *Mutant Girls Squad*, Lee Yong-Ju's stylish K-horror thriller *Possessed*, The Butcher Brothers' grindhouse-inspired shocker *The Violent Kind* and Colin McCarthy's Irish supernatural thriller *Outcast*.

Of course, it wouldn't be Fantasia without an endurance test. This year offers a spotlight called Subversive Serbia, dedicated to the new wave of

transgressive Serbian cinema. The program will feature screenings of *The Life and Death of a Porno Gang*, *Tears for Sale* and the notorious *A Serbian Film*, along with some of the country's older genre films, virtually unknown in North America.

"The new wave of independent Serbian cinema boasts some of the rawest and most confrontational filmmaking we've ever seen," says Davis. "*A Serbian Film* and *The Life and Death of a Porno Gang* in particular, are, in places, extreme beyond belief, but both are driven by forces much stronger than simple shock value. These are smart, powerful films, fuelled with urgency and rage. *A Serbian Film* is without a doubt the most disturbing film I've ever seen, and I fully expect at least one person to be carried out of our screenings on a stretcher."

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NEW FESTIVAL SPOTLIGHTS HORROR SHORTS BY WOMEN

With the role of women in the horror film-making business changing from victims in front of the lens to creators behind it, a new film festival aims to help bridge the gender divide, one bloody short at a time.

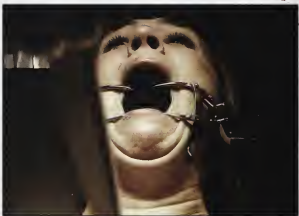
The first installment of the *Viscera Women's Film Festival*, which is set to take place July 17 at the Downtown Independent Theatre in Los Angeles, will screen "women directed and/or produced" short films. The event is the work of *The Chainsaw Mafia*, a female-focused production company created by filmmaker/actress/model Shannon Lark and *Pretty/Scary* (pretty-scary.net), a web community dedicated to women in horror, founded by filmmaker/actress/journalist Heidi Martinuzzi.

"Viscera is the collective internal organs within the abdominal cavity working together to create balance within the system," explains Lark of the title. "The festival celebrates those female horror filmmakers who work together, who work with men, and who work alone to create film in the genre. All of the filmmakers, the special guests, and the spectators are part of the balance to celebrate these filmmakers' accomplishments, and their future careers."

Among the confirmed guests for the festival are Amber Benson (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), Brea Grant (*Rob Zombie's Halloween II*) and Ce'rina Vincent (*Cabin Fever*), as well as several of the filmmakers, including Lark and Martinuzzi, who both have shorts screening in the program.

The concept for *Viscera* came to Lark a few years ago while she was working on one of her films.

"On the set, I was struck with the notion of how little women make opportunities to work with each other," she says. "The negligence of the female gender to come together and create had nothing to do with men, what



Fantasy, directed by Canadian filmmaker Isabel Grondin, will play at the first annual *Viscera Women's Film Festival*.

popular media says, or an outdated notion, it has everything to do with women in general being afraid to actually stand up and do something."

The next step was to team up with *Pretty/Scary* and start a community for female horror filmmakers under the *Viscera* banner. Since 2007, Lark, Martinuzzi and several other *Chainsaw Mafia* members have been promoting their shorts at festivals and online, and released them on DVD (the first two volumes are available at thechainsawmafia.com).

Lark says that aside from being produced and/or directed by women, the shorts must be technically competent to warrant inclusion in *Viscera*. But as far as

content goes, the field is wide open, and almost every style of genre tale can be found among the nearly 30 shorts in the festival lineup.

"[We're] always interested in a woman's perspective of how society views her, although we absolutely love splatstick, slashers, zombies, vampires, and more surreal works as well," affirms Lark.

She adds that since the inception of *Viscera*, she's developed a better understanding as to the different ways in which male and female filmmakers tend to approach horror.

"Both men and women do wonderful stuffs at the genre, but women tend to lean towards the psychological subgenre: body modification, dating disasters, intensely disturbed sexuality and extreme loss outline our more intense films."

Lark also points out that, with more women in creative control of horror films, there will be more interesting characters in which the next generation of female horror fans can find inspiration. Ultimately, that means a larger horror community in general.

She explains, "The genre is so clearly demon-strating stronger female archetypes, which the younger generation can look up to, as opposed to romantic comedies where women are portrayed as overly emotional characters that break out the ice cream as soon as an obstacle arrives."

DAVE ALEXANDER



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ROADKILL



youtube.com (search: The Undertaker vs. Kamala Survivor Series)

If reading this issue's feature on horror gripples leaves you throbbing with testosterone, instead of staging a bout of backyard wrestling with your jerk buddies, check out this clip of The Undertaker preparing Kamala for a dirt nap, complete with coffin, during the '92 WWF Survivor Series.

FEARNET

Our US readers will want to keep their browsers tuned to FEARnet as the website's free, streamable horror movie archive is ever expanding, and now includes newer titles such as *The Devil's Rejects* and cult classics including *The Beast Within*. International users, while blocked from viewing the films, can still access many of the site's interviews and other bonus vids.

hayeshudsonshoresofhorror.blogspot.com

Sick of horror movie blogs that only boast sporadic updates? Well, Hayes Hudson here you covered. His daily posts take stock of a variety of new genre releases (at all budgets), with the occasional trailer and interview footage thrown in for good measure. Get your fright fix today!

monsternovmagazineworld.blogspot.com

If you're the sort of horror fan who gets lost in nostalgia for the monster mags of yesteryear, Monster Magazine World is here to hold your hand as you walk down memory lane. With actual scans of a wide variety of classic mags, plus interviews with folks at their modern-day counterparts, including our very own Dave Alexander, MMW certainly lives up to its name.

newgrounds.com/portal/view/537629

In what is perhaps the most clever (and amusing) video game/horror film mash-up in recent history, players take on the role of *The Human Centipede's* villain Dr. Heller, who must face losers at a "human centipede" as it crawls down the screen towards him in classic 8-bit Centipede fashion. Warped, but in all the best ways.

Compiled by MONICA S. KUEBLER

Get a Roadkill suggestion? Email a link to: roadkill@ine-zine.com

TOXIC REMAKE AND SEQUEL AMONG NEW TROMA VENTURES

While Hollywood studios lobby for tighter restrictions on what you can do with their movies, Lloyd Kaufman's Troma Entertainment continues its 36-year tradition of getting low-budget fare in front of fans in any way possible.

The company recently sold the remake rights for its flagship movie, 1984's *The Toxic Avenger* to Hollywood producers Akiva Goldsman (*J. Am Legend*), Richard Saperstein (*The Mole*) and Charlie Carwin (*LA Ink*).

"I think what they want to do is create something like [the 1994 Jim Carrey movie] *The Mask*, that kind of whimsical movie," says Kaufman. "It'll be good for us. There's always a chance that the remake will be good."

Though Troma pocketed a decent cheque for the remake rights, Kaufman says the company has survived so long because of fervent fan support. In May, it posted the 2006 festively nightmare *Poultrygeist: Night of the Chicken Dead* for viewing on Hulu.com (US-only, unfortunately), making it the eighteenth Troma feature to be streamed for free on the site, along with the entire *Toxic Avenger* series. That same month, Kaufman and his three daughters announced the winners of an online contest to choose the best fan-created illustrations for their forthcoming memoir, *Incidental Characters—Tales from a Tromatic Childhood*. Since 2004, Kaufman's also given his blessing to two *Toxic Avenger* musicals without charge before Troma finally received payment for a separate, larger-budget Broadway production.

"The fans keep us in business," assures Kaufman. "So, somehow they'll make sure we'll survive."

In October, Focus Press will publish his latest book, *Self Your Own Damn Movie*, to give aspiring filmmakers some insights into working outside the studio system. In the meantime, Kaufman's also fleshing out the fifth *Toxic Avenger* movie, *The Toxic Twins*, which tackles such societal issues as gay marriage. Although some preliminary art for it was recently released, don't expect to see it too soon.

"I've been around a long time but I'm not very prolific," Kaufman says. "It takes me a long time to get something that I can really believe in."

A.S. BERMAN

ENTRAILS

➤ The Long Island home that inspired *The Amityville Horror* book and movie franchise went on the market for \$1.15 million in May, the first time since 1997. The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) have offered to rent the 1927 colonial-style waterfront dwelling to stage a "Slaughterhouse of Horrors," which would include exhibits emphasizing the horrible living – and dying – conditions faced by today's livestock. Also promised: a free "crazed and knife-wielding Ronald McDonald doll" for the kiddies.

➤ Professional songwriter Desmond Child reports that he and legendary producer Bob Ezrin are collaborating with Alice Cooper on *Welcome to My Nightmare 2*, a "shriekquel" to Cooper's 1975 solo debut. The original concept album explored the nightmares of a little boy named Steven and included Cooper classics such as the title track and "Only Women Bleed." Cooper previously collaborated with Ezrin on the albums *Love it to Death*, *Billion Dollar Babies* and *School of One*.

➤ In a recent UCLA study, researchers discovered the reason horror music soundtracks are so scary is because they often incorporate sounds that mimic the ones wild animals have made for millions of years during instances of distress and danger. Short audio clips from pivotal scenes in 102 movies, including nineteen horror films, were analyzed. The "non-linear vocalizations" being used were observed to be of a higher pitch and volume than those found in nature and have been in use from as far back as *King Kong* (1933).

➤ Fresh off their Gruesome Twosome tour, Rob Zombie and Alice Cooper join Megadeth, Slayer and Korn to headline this year's Heavy MTL festival in Montreal's Parc Jean-Drapeau. Taking place July 24 and 25, the show also includes Lamb of God, Testament, former Judas Priest frontman Rob Halford, Hatebreed, Fear Factory, Anvil and many more. For details, including ticket info and the complete lineup, check heavymtl.com.

➤ Academy Award-winning Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar is reuniting with Antonio Banderas for a forthcoming horror flick called *The Skin I Live In*. The movie, about a plastic surgeon bent on exacting revenge for the rape of his daughter, marks the first time Almodóvar and Banderas have worked together since 1990's *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!*. Shooting starts this summer.

➤ Shock rocker and horror movie addict Marilyn Manson is set to star opposite fiancée Evan Rachel Wood (*The Wrestler*) in *Splinter Saters*, the first in a planned series of movies inspired by '80s-era slashers. Adam Bhalal Lough will direct a production by Edward R. Pressman (*Sisters*, *American Psycho*) and David Gordon Green (*Saw* remake). Manson stars as a charismatic musician who brings the titular sisters (including Wood) under his spell, and is reportedly forming a death rock band specifically for the project.

A.S. BERMAN

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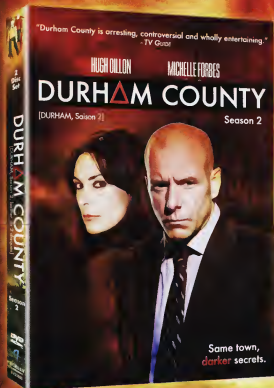
"DC is über-dark — and we wouldn't want it any other way."

— GREG DAVID, TV GUIDE.CA

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CORONER'S REPORT ★

WEIRD STATS & MORBID FACTS

CASE NO.
102

- 1. Eighteen-year-old Daniel Wayne Stanley from Dallas, Texas was arrested this past April after approaching police officers and showing off a severed foot he'd just stolen from a grave.
- 2. Early film actor Lou Tellegen experienced a run of bad career luck after suffering accidental burns to his face and a bout of cancer. In 1934 he surrounded himself with news and magazine clippings of his successes, then proceeded to stab himself to death with a pair of scissors.
- 3. In October 2008, a disgruntled Los Angeles barber poured gasoline on a homeless man and lit him on fire for loitering in front of his shop.
- 4. Footage from 1932's *White Zombie* featuring a close-up of Bela Lugosi's illuminated eyes was reused in *Revolt of the Zombies* four years later.
- 5. Hadehana is defined as "the constant use of the word 'hell' when speaking."
- 6. Stephen King used California's real-life, purportedly haunted Winchester Mansion, which remained under construction for 38 years, as his inspiration for the cursed house in his *Rose Red* TV miniseries.
- 7. Fox-baiting was a popular European pastime during the 17th and 18th centuries. Ropes would be draped across a playing field, then a number of foxes would be released. When a fox ran over a rope, participants would yank it fast, causing the animals to be catapulted into the air. The game would continue until all the foxes were dead.
- 8. When officials in Long Island would not allow 1979's *The Amityville Horror* to be filmed in Amityville, the shoot had to be moved to Toms River, New Jersey.
- 9. In the aftermath of the Great Fire of Rome, which was blamed on the city's Christian population, Emperor Nero set living Christians ablaze to serve as "pasta lanterns" to illuminate his garden at night.
- 10. The working title of *Alien* was *Star Beast*.
- 11. This past April, a 73-year-old man from Wallaceburg, Ontario died after his head was crushed in a Tim Horton's drive-thru. He was leaning out of the vehicle while reversing in an attempt to recover something he'd dropped on the ground, when his head became wedged between the car door and a metal post.
- 12. Actor Christian Slater, who replaced River Phoenix in the 1994 film *Interview with the Vampire* following his sudden death, donated his entire salary from the shoot to charity in memory of his friend.
- 13. For a recent Puerto Rican funeral, the family of a deceased motorcycle enthusiast had his corpse mounted on his bike as if he were riding it.

Compiled by MONICA S. KUEBLER

Get a weird stat or morbid fact? Send it through to: info@rue-morgue.com

THE RUE MORGUE SICK TOP SIX



PERVERSE PENETRATIONS

1. **TETSUO: THE IRON MAN**
DICK-DRILLED TO DEATH
2. **SEZEN**
IMPALED BY APPLIANCE
3. **THE EXORCIST**
REGAN'S CRUCI-FIX
4. **AFTERMATH**
STIFF STABBIN'
5. **NEKROMANTIK**
BROOM HANDLE BED BUDDY
6. **POULTRYGEIST**
FETID FINGER BUTT-PLUG

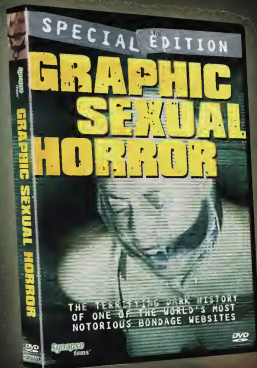


JAMES FISHER 25000VIEWS.COM

TORTURED TITANS
THE CREATURES (1969)
"THEY WEREN'T BORN...
THEY WERE KICKED OUT OF HELL!"



ONE OF THE MOST SHOCKING FILMS OF THE YEAR IS COMING TO DVD!
EXPLORE THE DARK UNDERBELLY OF BONDAGE, SADOMASOCHISM AND
CONSENSUAL TORTURE... DO YOU DARE "LOG IN"?



**"If you won't allow me to teach your children,
then I will corrupt them."**

- Brent "PD" Scott, Creator of INSEX.COM

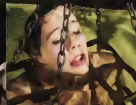
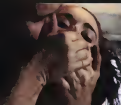
In 1997, a former professor at Carnegie-Mellon University started a phenomenon. The website he created, INSEX.COM, was devoted to bondage, fetish and sado-masochistic scenarios. By the time the site was shut down by the Department of Homeland Security, it had 35,000 members who paid \$60 a month to view its content.

An often raw and shocking documentary, *GRAPHIC SEXUAL HORROR* is a fascinating look at the rise and fall of the world's most notorious "violent porn" website and an exploration into the dark mind of its artistic creator, Brent Scott (aka "PD"). Containing original INSEX.COM behind-the-scenes footage and candid interviews with PD, the models, members and staff, this film "almost dares you to watch, assaulting the eyes from its opening frames with violent images of moaning, crying women, bound, tortured and terrorized" (Linda Barnard, *THESTAR.COM*).

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- Deleted Scenes
- "More From The Models" - Unused Interview Segments
- Interview with Co-Director Barbara Bell
- Theatrical Trailer
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2



3



4

1 AUNT TILLY \$14.99 - \$89.99

Aunt Tilly is the latest addition to the gallery of Haunted Memories' resident lunatic lenticular artist Edward Allen. She's the picture of Edwardian elegance — but catch her at the wrong angle, and you'll see her chilling, grinning skull and cobweb-draped finery in its true form. Get your haunt on at changingportraits.com.

2 PAN'S LABYRINTH BUSTS \$70 each

Bring Pan's Labyrinth home with a bust of The Pale Man or Pan himself. Each poly-stone likeness stands over eight-inches tall and includes autographs from character creator Guillermo del Toro and actor Doug Jones (who played the creatures). They're San Diego Comic-Con exclusives limited to 500 each, but a small quantity will be available after the show. Play peek-a-boo with The Pale Man at gentlegiantltd.com.

3 BARNABAS COLLINS DOLL \$18.99

Fans of *Dark Shadows*, the '60s-era gothic melodrama may (possibly) raise the glimmer of a smile at this action figure. Created in the retro Mega-style, the eight-inch "highly articulated" version of vampire Barnabas Collins comes complete with real clothing, as does a stunning version of witch Angelique. It's up to you to make them brood. Enter the Shadows at spectretoy.com.

4 SKELETON DR. MARTENS \$140

Interesting fact: one-quarter of the bones in the human body are in the feet. And the ones adorning the exterior of these fourteen-hole Doc Martens (inspired by *Guitar Hero 5* and *Band Hero*) not only provide a useful guide to your podiatric anatomy, they also glow in the dark. Get your bone boots at zappos.com.

"FULL OF TEETH-GRINDING TENSION AND GENUINE TERROR"

RUE MORQUE MAGAZINE

A FILM BY LAWRENCE GOUGH

SALVAGE



**"A SERIOUS SHOCKER...
THRILLING FROM
START TO FINISH"**

- CHRIS WEBSTER, QUOTEATHLUS



EXTRAS

BEHIND-THE-SCENES
CAST AND CREW
INTERVIEWS

DIRECTOR, PRODUCER,
WRITER AND ACTOR
COMMENTARY

"A TAUT, EDGY, RELENTLESSLY PACED HORROR"

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THE CREATORS OF [REC] 2
SHINE A LIGHT ON ONE OF
THE MOST TERRIFYING
EXAMPLES OF THE
NEW SPANISH
HORROR FILM.

WHERE DARKNESS

[BY DAVE
ALEXANDER] LIVES



THE DARK RECESSES OF OLD BUILDINGS HOLD TERRIBLE SECRETS FROM THE PAST. GHOSTS, MONSTERS AND DEMONS – GAUNT THINGS WITH CONTORTED BODIES – LIE IN WAIT FOR CURIOUS CHILDREN. PARENTS AND OTHER AUTHORITY FIGURES ARE POWERLESS TO STOP THEM, AND SOMETIMES BECOME THEM. BOOGEYMEN ARE REAL, AND THEY RULE THESE INKY NIGHTMARES WITH TERRIFYING ACCORD. THIS IS THE WORLD OF THE NEW SPANISH HORROR FILM.

Though many of them are heavily influenced by American genre films, these movies are an a response to Hollywood horror trends that favour recycled content, music video-style editing, cheap scares and eye candy over storytelling substance. The new Spanish horror film is character-driven, atmospheric and classically paced to build mystery, tension and suspense. They display a technical polish and colour palette that favours browns, sometimes institutional greens and, almost always, splashes of blood red. Their directors are very much at home in the shadows.

This particular flavour of Spanish horror has surged over the past five years, making a splash at international film festivals, but is often said to have had its first stirrings at the beginning of the millennium. It was 2001 that saw the release of both Guillermo del Toro's *The Devil's Backbone* – for which the Mexican filmmaker travelled to Spain to make his sublime tale of a haunted orphanage during the Spanish Civil War – and Alejandro Amenábar's *The Others*, a lauded English-language Victorian-style ghost story starring Nicole Kidman as a mentally fragile mother of two children who are allergic to sunlight.

Then, in 2002, Miramax (which distributed *The Others*) released Jaime Balaguer's *The Darkness*, a mystery-slepped film about an unstable family moving into a house that hides a supernatural entity intent on using the daughter (Anna Paquin) to complete a curse borne of darkness; it had been shelved for a couple of years, then was dumped into theatres after being re-cut. Balaguer took another crack at the North American market with the J-horror-influenced *Fragile*, which features a nurse arriving at a dilapidated children's hospital to discover a vengeful entity is injuring the young patients. Made in 2005, it's finally hitting DVD in North America later this year.

The world really took notice of Spain's genre output in 2006, with del Toro's Academy Award-winning dark fantasy *Pan's Labyrinth* (*El laberinto del fauno*), which juxtaposed the real-life horror of 1940s-era Franco Spain with a young female protagonist's trips to a mythological underworld, inhabited by such unforgettable creatures as The Pale Man.

That year also brought *El*



EXORCISMUS

Quiroga's post-apocalyptic *The Dark Hour* (aka *The Cold Hour*, not released in North America yet), about a community living in a bunker besieged by zombie-like creatures that wait in the shadows, as well as Nacho Corda's nightmarish *The Abandoned*, chiefly set in an eternally shadowy, decaying farmhouse with a terrible family history. The next year saw the critical and financial success of Juan Antonio Bayona's *The Orphanage*, about a couple buying and moving into the orphanage where the wife grew up, only to uncover its horrible past after their adopted son goes missing (An American remake is in the works.) In the spring of 2007, Juan Carlos Fresnadillo's *28 Weeks Later* was released. The Spanish/British/American co-production was a sequel to *28 Days Later* and continues the rage virus story. It features a particularly chilling sequence shot with night vision, in which the heroes travel through a subway station teeming with the infected.

If you measure success by the virility of a franchise, however, *[REC]* is king. The 2007 film was written by Balaguero with Paco Plaza and Luis Berdugo—long-time cohorts in the Spanish film industry who previously collaborated on horror projects for the prolific Filmax company—and co-directed by Balaguero and Plaza (for more on their respective projects, see p. 19). By employing the cost-effective first-person POV video camera gimmick popularized by *The Blair Witch Project*, the movie earned more than \$32 million worldwide on a tiny budget of \$1.8 million.

It opens with a local news team doing a late-night fluff piece on the inner workings of a fire hall, but takes an unexpected turn when the reporter, cameraman and sound guy tag along to a call at a creepy, dark apartment building. Once inside, much as in George Romero's *Queen of the Dead*, they discover that some sort of infection has spread to the residents; it essentially causes them to take on the characteristics of the rage-virus sufferers in Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later*. Before the crew can escape, the building is sealed off by a S.W.A.T.-like police team. Along with a cop and some of the residents, they fend off the infected, search for a way out and discover a room that suggests the outbreak may be occult in nature. In the famous final scene, the heroine is dragged away in the dark by some sort of gaunt, pale, contorted... thing.

Genuinely terrifying, *[REC]* was a hit in Spain and beyond, and led to the American remake *Quarantine* (2008).

At the same time, Berdugo was working on his first feature film directing gig, helming the recently released Kevin Costner movie *The New Daughter* (p. 21), which has a family moving into a new house and being terrorized by creatures of the night. In Spain, movies with these similar elements continue to appear in the wake of the *[REC]* films, including Quiroga's *No-Do* (2009), about a new mother who moves into an old house and is tormented by "lurid figures and ghostly shadows"; Manuel Carballo's forthcoming documentary-style *Exorcismos* (2010), which co-stars Hellraiser's Doug Bradley and features a possessed teenage girl whose hypnosis sessions with a priest are captured on hidden camera; and Antoni Solà's 3-D *Web Cam* (2010), which co-stars Robert Englund, and features first-person video and a group of kids trapped in a high-rise.

But for those dying to see more *[REC]*, the sequel begins its limited North American theatrical run this month, from Magnet Releasing. Set fifteen minutes after the events of the first film, *[REC] 2* follows an armed police team escorting a public health officer inside the quarantined apartment to retrieve a blood sample that may be key to stopping the outbreak. In the process they encounter a trio of curious kids who sneak into the building. With a bigger budget, the events unfold mostly via the team's helmet-cams, plus there's more gore and special effects, which are used to help spin the story in an unexpected direction, from a pseudo-zombie film to a religious horror story that takes cues from *The Exorcist*, *Alien*, *Exorcist II*, *The Thing* and *Shivers*.

Last fall, *[REC] 2* made its North American premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival. The day after its packed midnight screening, Balaguero and Plaza gave *Rue Morgue* an exclusive interview about making the film, the genesis of *[REC]* and the cultural influences on contemporary Spanish horror. This was all before international audiences celebrated *[REC] 2* as a rare sequel that bests the original, and more *[REC]* films were announced. Plaza's prequel, *[REC] Genesis*, and Balaguero's final installment, *[REC] Apocalypse*, are scheduled for 2011 and 2012, respectively.

As you'll read, the unassuming filmmakers didn't realize they were launching one of the biggest international horror franchises. Really, they just wanted to get you in the dark and scare the hell out of you.

Sketches of Spanish horror: (clockwise from top) The undead Tardes sports her barbed mask in *The Orphanage*; a house of secrets in the upcoming *No-Do*; the ghost of Sam in *The Devil's Backbone*; and the post-apocalyptic forthcoming possession thriller *Exorcismos*.



Duboly Infection: A policeman, Jefe (Dacar Sánchez Zafra), tries to contain an infected chick, with explosive results.

How did you start working together?

JACOB HERNÁNDEZ: It has to do with us being friends for a lot of years and working in the same company. ... One day, while having sodas, we began to fantasize about what would be a really scary horror film. We're both fans of the genre and we said, "What new elements could we introduce to make a really scary, really effective horror film?" It was very natural — we both just started talking about the project and we both fell in love with the idea, so we developed it together.

JAUME BALAGUERO: It was risky at the beginning. We had the idea to make a different sort of film using the real-time, first-person camera style, done like a TV report. It was not a conventional movie, [but rather] something experimental. It wasn't clear that it would be good enough to be released in theatres. We decided to make it together because it was risky.

How long was it between the time you decided to work together and when you started actually making the film?

JB: Just three months — everything was very, very fast. We had the idea and said, "Let's do it now!" If we waited months, we might have changed our minds and lost our enthusiasm. So we went to the company (Filmix), talked to the producers and convinced them to do it right away. It was a cheap movie that was easy to design — just one camera, continuous shots, one location. Two months after that meeting, we started to shoot the film.

[REC] 2 seems a lot more ambitious than [REC] in terms of special effects and set design; did it have a much bigger budget?

JP: It's bigger because we had six weeks to shoot instead of the four weeks we had for the first film. And there were more complicated effects involved that made the budget rise a little. We didn't shoot 100 percent on location; we had to build the

FROM THE BEGINNING, WE BOTH AGREED THAT ONE OF THE WAYS TO MAKE A SEQUEL WAS TO TIE IT TO THE PARANORMAL, THE SUPERNATURAL.

TO CREATE JAUME
BALAGUERO

I THINK THE WHOLE MOVIE IS AN HOMAGE TO THE FILMS THAT WE'VE GROWN UP WITH. ESPECIALLY '80s HORROR FILMS.

[RECI'DAC: PACO]

Building Suspense: The police team discovers the horrors of the quarantined apartment

interiors of the penthouses on a sound stage. But the budget is still very low.

In terms of having two writer/directors on one film, is it a give-and-take process or are you always on the same page? How do the two of you work together?

JB: In a very organic way. I have my own vision, Paco has his own vision. All these things come together when

we make *[REC]* but it's not conscious. [In terms of] the story of *[REC]* itself, it comes down to a matter of deciding which elements are in, and which ones are out. The film was growing itself, like a living thing.

PP: I think if either one of us had directed the film alone, it would've been very different. When I see both *[iREC]* films, I see traces of each of us. There are things in there that are the result of us each adding things that we like.

JB: There's a soccer reference at the beginning of *[REC]* 2 where the characters are talking about the game — that's me.

PP: The creative process of these films has been very clear. It's like two children in a playground sharing ideas: "What if this happens now?" "And now what if this happens?!" That's how we work together — throwing ideas back and forth. It's very collaborative, so I think *[REC]* and *[REC]* 2 go to places where neither of us would go alone.

Jaume, there's a consistent element in your films in which crea-

*tures emerge from the dark. And Paco, your work shows a great love of nostalgia. How did these two interests come together in the *[REC]* series?*

JB: From the very beginning we wanted the story to take place in the dark — everyone at night, in an isolated building, quarantined, the phone lines are cut, the lights are out. The film was asking for darkness, and we accepted it and put the darkness in the film. The idea to use night vision at the end of the movie came not specifically from me, or from Paco.

PP: The main influence was the video "Rubber Johnny," made by [music video director and video artist] Chris Cunningham for [British electronic act] Aphex Twin. It was really

[PRE-REC]

THE OTHER FILMS OF PACO PLAZA AND JAUME BALAGUERÓ

BY DAVE ALEXANDER AND RODRIGO GUINO



JAUME BALAGUERÓ

ALICIA (1994)

Shadow and alpine music set the atmosphere as a masturbating woman pushes blood onto a picture of Christ; then men in fetish gear force-feed her slime before jabbing a tube into her neck while she suckles a biomechanical nursemaid. Balaguero's monochromatic eight-minute debut defies channels. *Eisenstein, Tetsuo and, yup, Cronenberg.* (YouTube search: "Alicia Jaime Balaguero.") **DA**

DAYS SIN LUZ (1995)

Jaume Balaguero's second short, *Días sin luz* (Days Without Light) is a feature film spanning generations and time zones—crunched into eight minutes! The haunting narrative centres around a boy abandoned by his parents and adopted by a very strange couple as his days of light (i.e. following birth) turn dark and forbidding. Ambitious, gay and perverse. (YouTube search: "Días sin luz Jaime.") **RG**



THE NAMELESS (1999)

Based on the 1981 Ramsey Campbell novel of the same name, *The Nameless* begins with the discovery of the mutilated corpse of a missing girl. Six years later, her mother, Claudia, receives a phone call—the voice claims to be the girl and begs to be rescued. With the help of a cop and a reporter, Claudia follows a trail of clues that leads her to an evil-obsessed cult with dark roots in Nazi experiments.

This is fertile Balaguero territory: abandoned buildings, occult mystery and children in jeopardy. Beautifully shot and profoundly grim, it took six years to hit DVD in North America. **DA**

DARKNESS (2002)

When a family returns to the father's childhood home, a presence hiding in the shadowy emerges. As the rage-prone dad loses his sanity, his daughter (Aina Pique) discovers that the creaky family house is connected to a murderous cult bent on unleashing evil upon the world. She literally lights the darkness to save her brother and mom (Lena Oliva). Hobbled by Miramax to PG-13 status and shelved for two years, the uncut DVD reveals a (sometimes too) slowly-paced creep-out that builds to a nerve-wracking, apocalyptic conclusion. Again, Balaguero presents a world where true evil lurks. **DA**

FRAGILE (2005)

When Amy Nicholls (Catala Rodighiero) becomes the replacement night nurse at a soon-to-be-abandoned children's hospital, the stage is set for prime Spanish chills. Even though it takes its time, *Fragile* ramps up to sheer horror with the reveal of "the mechanical woman," a terrifying apparition that resides in an abandoned upstairs floor. This promising ghost story is worth viewing for that alone alone, though a lazy plot and two-lane characters compromise the effect. Still, the central spook is a pitch-black sketch on an otherwise colourless canvas. **RG**

6 FILMS TO KEEP YOU AWAKE: (O LEI) (2006)

Clara and Mano are searching for a place to live and end up in a dilapidated building that is pretty much the opposite of what they're looking for. The creepy landlady, however, is convinced that the home is theirs... and she may be right. Aside from pulling a unique twist on a tired premise, this 68-minute film, shot as part of the *6 Films To Keep You Awake* collection, banks on suspense before dissolving in blood, innuendo and suspenseful. *O Lei* (Para entrar a ver) shows what Balaguero can do when he has a firm grip on a tight story. Highly recommended. **RG**



PACO PLAZA

ABUELOS (1999)

An exercise in style over content, this doffy fifteen-minute short chronicles the gloomy goings-on at a rundown hospital for the elderly, who thrive off a Gerber-like, child-derived goop. Narratively cryptic but exceptionally lensed, Plaza's *Abuelos* (Spanish diminutive for "grandparents") betrays the then-budding director's inexperience as a filmmaker. (Available on the Small Gauge Truvarc: Fantasia Film Festival shorts compilation.) **RG**

THE SECOND NAME (2002)

Following her father's sudden suicide, Daniela (Enca Prior) is left with a mountain of questions and few answers. Her comatose mother is no help, and neither are the concerned friends and doctors who surround her. Thus begins this wordy, molasses-paced mystery that draws momentum from bite-sized reveals, which eventually lead to a complicated climax. Based on the 2001 novel *Pact of the Fathers* by Ramsey Campbell, Plaza's adaptation could have strayed a little further from the source material to break from its dialogue-heavy confines. **RG**

WEREWOLF HUNTER—LEGEND OF ROMASANTA (2004)

Also known simply as *Romasanta*, this one is based on the case of Manuel Blanco Romasanta, who killed thirteen people in Spain during the 1850s but was acquitted after claiming he was a werewolf. Julian Sands plays the title character, who seduces a young woman (junior Elsa Pataky, pictured above) while struggling to cover his tracks (human and wolf). She uncovers his gruesome secret and tries to put a stop to it despite her feelings. Though slow and marred by bilious romance, this British-Spanish co-production does boast a killer werewolf transformation scene. **DA**



6 FILMS TO KEEP YOU AWAKE: (THE CHRISTMAS TALE) (2006)

Eighties nostalgia fuels this 71-minute entry in the Spanish version of *Master of Horror*. Penned by *REC* co-writer *The New Daughter* director Luis Berrios, *The Christmas Tale* (aka *Cuento de navidad*) channels *The A-Team*, *The Goonies*, *The Kid* and various VHS schlock (Paul Naschy films included) as a bunch of kids—including one played by *REC*'s Pau Poch and another by *Pan's Labyrinth* star Adria Balaguero—find a thief trapped in a pit in the woods and force her to give them her heart. Dressed like Santa and possibly zombieified, she escapes and chases them with an axe in *la Silent Night, Deadly Night* through a closed amusement park. Fun, fast-paced and fearless of being rusty. **DA**



Fear Of The Dark: Investigative journalist Angélica Vives (Mónica Vassallo) and assistant/doctor Owen (Jonathan Melchor) illuminated through the camera's night-vision in [REC] 2 and (below) an infected victim gets a needle in the eye before taking a turn for the worse in [REC].

powerful and we experienced something very similar to what we wanted to generate/communicate: horror, the unaccountable.

JB: It was really inspirational.

And in terms of the various homages to other horror films?

PP: There are specific references that you can pinpoint, such as *The Thing*, with the blood test, but I think the whole movie is an homage to the films that we've grown up with, especially '80s horror films. Both of us – and you, and people around the world – during the video days would go to the video store and rent three or four movies. It's that kind of enjoying, that sharing with your friends, that cinematic experience with your buddies watching a horror film and laughing at each other if one of you gets scared. That kind of play with the audience is something we wanted to have in the film. So a lot of particular references came out of there. There are even ones from films we haven't seen, such as *Night of the Creeps* – we didn't know that there was that worm-thing in the movie. It's a film made by horror fans, so you can't help but love that all the things you grew up with are finally on the screen.

The first [REC] is more of a 28 Days Later infection-style horror film, but now you've steered the story into the realm of the supernatural. What was the goal here?

JB: The first [REC] does take a medical approach to horror, but at the end of it we added in some suggestions that it was related to the supernatural. We decided to take that suggestion of a supernatural universe and develop it more. One of the ideas for a sequel was that we can't repeat the same thing, create the same experiment; we have to do something similar, but at the same time, something different. From the beginning, we both agreed that one of the ways to make a sequel was to tie it to the paranormal, the supernatural.



There's a very strong Catholic presence in Spanish culture. Is there something about the presentation of religious-themed horror that lends the film a particular cultural flavour? Would Spanish audiences receive this film differently than North American audiences?

PP: I think less and less because our cultural references are more or less unified. We watch the same shows on TV, more and more we think the same way. But

there are some differences, and religion is one of them. We screened the film in Venice, and in Italy there's even more of a [Catholic] religious presence than in Spain. Maybe it adds some exotic flavour to our film in North America, or even Eastern areas such as Hong Kong or Japan. Maybe they see something more exotic. But for us it's more natural. I was raised in the Catholic church, at school there were crucifixes all over, you have religion at school, so it's part of your culture. In the last 2000 years, for 1600 of them all the art forms were inspired by religion. It wasn't until the 17th century that this changed. In the cities in which we live, it's all around us, and in every cultural manifestation, so it's part of us.

After the first [REC], you guys said that you weren't going to make a sequel, but here we are. What changed your minds?

JB: The enthusiasm of the audience. When we went to festivals and were in contact with the audience – real audiences – they were very, very excited and it was contagious. When we went online and read all these blogs about [REC], it was so exciting for us that eventually we decided to keep the party going, or rather have another party. The same people will be invited, but it will be longer, with more conflict!

The film ends with the strong suggestion of another sequel. What are your plans for the next "party"?

Continued on p. 24

IN THE NEW DAUGHTER, [REC] CO-WRITER LUIS BERDEJO JOINS INTO THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR TO PIT A FRACTURED FAMILY AGAINST A HORRIFYING FORCE OF NATURE.

HOUSE AT THE EDGE OF THE WOODS

BY L. E. ALEXANDER

IF YOU JUDGE A DVD BY ITS COVER, you'd never know that *The New Daughter* is a powerhouse of a horror movie. Kevin Costner cradling a shotgun while a girl stands behind him in the shadows — hell, you probably wouldn't even know it's a horror movie at all.

However, it would certainly pique your interest if you recognized the title as an adaptation of the chilling, highly original short story by award-winning Irish author John Connolly; knew that the girl hidden in the shadows is played by *Pao's Labyrinth* star Ima Baquero, and read the credits on the back to discover that it features a score by Oscar-nominated composer Javier Navarrete (*The Devil's Backbone*). *Pao's Labyrinth* and was directed by Luis Berdejo, co-writer of [REC]. *The New Daughter* might look like a second-rate Kevin Costner Hollywood thriller, but the accomplished American-Spanish co-production is actually an overlooked and under-promoted work of Latin-made horror.

"It is not easy to make your feature debut if you have a very unique and personal script, since producers and investors are not the most adventurous people in the world," says Berdejo, speaking to *Rue Morgue* from Spain. "I feel that what happened to *The New Daughter* was just a lack of love from her [scarred] owners."

The film, which was written by John Travis (*The Haunting of Molly Hartley*), sees a single-parent family move to an isolated house on the outskirts of a South Carolina town. Costner plays John James, an author learning to care for his teenage daughter Louisa (Baquero) and young son Sam (Gaelin Griffith) after his wife abandoned them for a new husband. Raging with hormones and anger, Louisa hates their new home and goes exploring in the woods surrounding the property, where she finds a large, ancient burial mound. When she starts acting strangely — sleepwalking, disappearing and returning home covered in dirt and clutching a bizarre straw doll — John investigates the history of the house, discovering that the previous owners went missing and that the hill in the backyard hosts something that wants his daughter.

"*The New Daughter* was more than right for me," says Berdejo, "because it has lots of elements that I have always been interested in: kids, nature, animals, creatures, mystery. All those elements were already in John Connolly's short story."

Those interests form the dominant themes in Berdejo's earlier short

THE NEW DAUGHTER



films. They include *...ya no puede conmigo* (2001), about a schoolboy who overcomes his fear of creepy crawlers by collecting them in jars, but soon takes his new pastime to shocking extremes; *La guerra* (2005), which has a boy in a bombed out building desperately trying to hide his infant sister from a Nazi soldier; *Forgotten in the Desert* (2006), about a boy going into the woods to make contact with the aliens that abducted his mother; and *Luzneveles* (2007), an Old West story of a preacher, a girl and an unusual boy who are looking for a map.

Berdejo says that although the success of *Over the Hedge*, the American remake of [REC], raised his profile considerably in Hollywood, he scored *The New Daughter* directing on the strength of his shorts. He was already working on his debut feature when [REC] (for which he shares his co-writer credit with the directors, Paco Plaza and Jaume Balagueró) became a hit. Although he doesn't have a writing credit on [REC] 2, he'll return to the series to co-write the prequel, [REC] Genesis, with Plaza. He points out that he has a very close, natural working relationship with his [REC] collaborators.

"We all share a common universe of interest, so it was pretty easy to work together. We had lots of brainstorming, we drew a building on a slide and we started to move the markers all over it, talking about the action and the scenes we wanted to have in the movie."

With *The New Daughter*, Berdejo has one foot in the world of Spanish cinema and one in American moviemaking. He hopes it can stay that way.

"I would love to have a career that allows me to combine both personal and commercial movies — Guillermo del Toro is a huge example of this for all of us," he explains. "[Spanish horror directors] just want a chance to be able to shoot a feature. We will have time over the years to make our own personal stuff." ■





Damned Kids: (left to right) A pint-sized apartment-dweller attacks, and camera-wielding teens get caught up in the mayhem.

PP: There will be a third party, but I don't think we'll necessarily be part of it, I guess... I don't know. A month ago, I'd have said it's impossible, that I wouldn't be involved with it, that I need to move forward with some other films. But when you see the reaction of people who have come to the screenings, it's so satisfying – the feeling of sharing the experience – that for a moment you think it would be great to do [REC] 3. But I don't know, I don't think we're going to make it, but someone will and hopefully we'll be somehow involved in the process.

Do you want to write the story?

PP: Maybe contribute ideas, I don't know.

JB: It depends. In fact [laughs], we have some ideas.

I knew it!

JB: We made [REC] and [REC] 2, so of course we're always speculating about how the story could continue. We'll see.

So if you don't make another [REC] movie, what's next?

JB: I'm starting to work on my next film. It's called *Flatmate* but it's not a horror film, it's a suspense thriller, very perverse.

PP: I'm working on a film called *Damned Friday* but it's in the very early stages. On YouTube you can watch the trailer for it, which is the result of a fake trailer contest.

The [REC] fans will want to hear otherwise, of course. At last night's screening you mentioned that people have been visiting the apartment where it was shot. How have fans influenced the series?

THE FILM WAS ASKING FOR DARKNESS. AND WE ACCEPTED IT AND PUT THE DARKNESS IN THE FILM.

[BY CRITIC JAUME BALAGUERO]

PP: I wouldn't say it's been so much an influence as a stimulation, because their enthusiasm was really amazing. People went to see the building it was filmed in and they shot their own [REC] footage.

And after that, the landlord still let you back in the building to film the sequel?

PP: He wasn't happy with the idea. But a lot of people shoot in that building because the facility is amazing. It almost looks like there

are people living there, although it's empty. It looks like it's in use but you can do whatever you want with it because it's empty. You can even build a set in the apartments because they're very big. We rented it out for two-and-a-half months [for [REC] 2] and he wasn't very happy because of the pink stairs. If there is a [REC] 3, I don't know what we'll do.

JB: Nothing in this building, that's for sure! [Laughs]

Pink stairs?

JB: We were throwing [fake] blood around all the time and the owner asked the FX guy, "This won't leave a stain?" And he said, "No, no, it's water-based, it'll be as clean as it was before," but he was lying. Now the stairs, because of the blood, are pink. They tried to clean it off with bleach and lots of other products, but it didn't work. It's really funny because it's really pink due to the 150 litres of blood that we used.

You also mentioned something after the screening about a former tenant that still returns to the building.

JB: There's a woman that used to live there with her parents; they rented an apartment there her whole life. Eventually the parents died and she had to leave the apartment. She was so upset with the idea of losing her life there with her parents, she asked the owner to let her enter every day to clean [it] and to arrange it like it was.

MALFORMED AND MONSTROUS

THE DISTURBING SHORT FILMS OF CHRIS CUNNINGHAM, THE DIRECTOR WHOSE WORK INSPIRED

BY TREVOR TUMINSKI

CO-DIRECTOR PAGO PLAZA CITES BRITISH MUSIC VIDEO DIRECTOR CHRIS CUNNINGHAM AS THE MAIN INSPIRATION FOR *(REC)*'S DISTURBING DEPICTION OF DARKNESS AND THE UNEXPLAINED. RM DISSECTS FIVE OF

THE CREEPIEST WORKS BY THE INFLUENTIAL VIDEO ARTIST, WHO CUT HIS TEETH DOING SPECIAL EFFECTS WORK ON *NIGHTMARE*, *HARDWARE* AND *ALIEN 3* BEFORE DEVELOPING HIS OWN DISTINCTLY UNNERVING STYLE AS A FILMMAKER.

1 "BACK WITH THE KILLER" (The Autopsy, 1996)

A gangly, eyelless figure mouths singer Luke Haines' lyrics from inside a giant test tube, before writhing around like a contortionist in a holding cell, monitored on closed-circuit TV. The humanoid gets stripped into an electric chair by two burly guards as Haines' face is projected onto that of the strange being. This one set the tone for his future experiments mashing mutant anomalies with televised terror.

2 "COME TO DADDY" (Aphex Twin, 1997)

British electronic musician Richard David James promises to eat your soul as he's broadcast as a morphing video transmission on a discarded TV in a bleak cityscape. The music video itself twitches with static as "Daddy's" likeness spreads to a gaggle of kids who run through the streets wreaking havoc. As a terrified old lady looks on, an amorphous blob crawls out of the idiot box and reconstitutes as an anemic demon also bearing the singer's visage; elements of Videodrome and *Poltergeist* abound. UK director Colin McCarthy recently cited the video as a major influence on his upcoming horror movie *Outcast*.

3 "AFRIKA SHOX" (Leftfield and Afrika Bambaataa, 1999)

A gaunt, zombie-eyed homeless man stumbles through city streets, completely ignored by passersby, until brushing past one pedestrian causes his own to break off, smashing on the ground as if it were porcelain. Terrified, he continues to lose body parts to encounters in the unforgiving landscape until, eventu-

ally just a torso with stumps for arms, hobbling on one leg, he's hit by a taxi and explodes into dust. Cunningham's innate ability to sync visuals to nuanced audio cues is best displayed here.

4 "RUBBER JOHNNY" (2003)

This six-minute shot, shot in night vision on DV, with soundtrack by Aphex Twin, features a gibberish-speaking, wheelchair-bound deformity with a massive head. Locked in the basement with only his pet Chihuahua, Johnny reclines in his chair, his maw agape as lights flicker and hyperactive electronics pace him through a psychotic episode. Staccato gestures, rapid-fire editing and frenetic animation combine with monochromatic creepiness and body horror for the kind of unsettling visuals that directly inspired *(REC)*, as well as the undeniably similar *Big Brain* mutant from *The Hills Have Eyes* (2006).

5 "SHEENA IS A PARASITE" (The Horrors, 2006)

A girl in a white dress (Samantha Morton) dances as if possessed to The Horrors' grimy garage rock, lifting her skirt sporadically to reveal a stygian mess of fleshy tentacles and shiny innards churning in her bustle. Aside from singer Faris Badwan—who leans into frame, crouches and wails—the band play like stoic cousins to The Gruesomes, barely moving a muscle even when Sheena's face turns inside out. At a minute and 38 seconds, this is a jarringly quick and gooey dance party.

And all of her parents' furniture is still there?

JB: Exactly, it's really creepy. And down a corridor, there is a door; you open that door and there are wooden stairs. If you go up, there's a mini-room with a ceiling this high [he raises his hand about four feet off the floor]. In it is a mini-bed with a doll in it. Everyone [on the shoot] thought we had set it up to scare them but we didn't. This family had a boy or girl and they chose to hide it in this little room. It's very creepy.

FP: It's like this woman wasn't able to start her new life.

JB: She was stuck in the past with the memories of her parents.

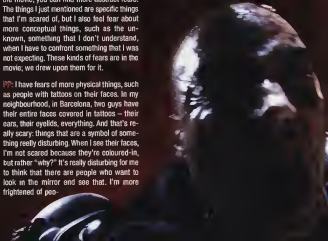
*There's certainly a very nightmarish quality to the *(REC)* movies. So then, what scares the hell out of you?*

JB: For me, things that are scary are very

quodidian things: violence, the possibility that people I love could get hurt or suffer. But in the movie, you can find more abstract fears. The things I just mentioned are specific things that I'm scared of, but I also feel fear about more conceptual things, such as the unknown, something that I don't understand, when I have to confront something that I was not expecting. These kinds of fears are in the movie; we drew upon them for it.

FP: I have fears of more physical things, such as people with tattoos on their faces. In my neighbourhood, in Barcelona, two guys have their entire faces covered in tattoos—their ears, their eyelids, everything. And that's really scary: things that are a symbol of something really disturbing. When I see their faces, I'm not scared because they're coloured-in, but rather "why?" It's really disturbing for me to think that there are people who want to look in the mirror and see that. I'm more frightened of peo-

ple than supernatural things. What's inside a man's head is really scary for me.



GRIM GRAPPLERS

BY DAN MURPHY

FROM THE FRENCH
ANGEL TO THE
UNDERTAKER,
RUE MERCUE
SQUARES OFF
AGAINST THE
KILLER TAG TEAM
OF **HORROR** AND
WRESTLING.



H

ORROR AND WRESTLING HAVE MERGED TO THE POINT WHERE GRAPPLERS ARE STARRING IN SLASHER PICS, AND WHILE THIS MAY SEEM LIKE CRASS CROSS-PROMOTION, IT'S REALLY THE LOGICAL CONCLUSION TO A LONG-STANDING TRADITION.

Even before professional wrestling became a television staple in the 1950s, promoters delved into the horror world to develop monster characters. Jack Pfeifer was one such promoter, credited by many wrestling historians as the top progenitor of its movement toward gimmicky and theatrics.

"[Pfeifer] was like George Romero and John Waters, mixed with a little Russ Meyer and [wrestling maven] Vince McMahon Jr. in terms of his 'outlaw' promotional style," says pro wrestling scribe Mike Lano, who has been reporting on the sport since 1966. "He thought nothing of buying a ticket to [another] promoter's legit pro wrestling show and commandeering the outside-the-ring mic to yell, 'Come this Friday night to the Buffalo Armory to see my freakassssss.' ... Pfeifer and other promoters were all part of wrestling's carry roots."

These days, wrestling is dominated by World Wrestling Entertainment (formerly the World Wrestling Federation), the publicly owned corporation that produces four TV programs each week, as well as fourteen annual pay-per-view events. WWE also has two touring groups running shows throughout North America, as well as regular stints in Europe and Japan. Total Nonstop Action and Ring of Honor are two smaller promotions with national television broadcasts, appearing on Spike TV and HDNet, respectively. Long before wrestling was concentrated in a handful of national companies and relied on television for exposure, the business ran on an interconnected territorial circuit (this allowed independent regional clubs to cross-pollinate their acts and stage regular events in smaller urban centres). It's there

that the horror elements had their organic beginnings.

One of the most influential early grapplers, the French Angel (real name: Maurice Tillet) suffered from acromegaly, a disorder related to the body's excessive production of growth hormone, which caused his head to swell disproportionately and eventually killed him at age 51. (It has been said that Tillet was used as the model for the animated ogre Shrek, and the resemblance between the wrestler and the DreamWorks character is truly striking.)

"Watching Tillet wrestle was the closest thing people would ever see to a mythical creature stepping into the squared circle," says J. Tithonus Pedraud, proprietor of thehumanmarvels.com, a website devoted to human anomalies. "He captured the imagination of crowds. He was an aberration of nature — an ogre — alive and in person. Such a spectacle was not seen again until Andre the Giant made people believe that giants were absolutely real."

The French Angel became a big box-office draw during the '40s and '50s and spawned a line of imitators, mostly perpetuated by Pfeifer, including The Swedish Angel (Phil Olafsson, who also had acromegaly and strongly resembled Karloff's Frankenstein's monster) and The Super Swedish Angel (Tor Johnson, who appeared beside Bela Lugosi in Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space*).

"Women faint! Men shout! Children cry!" proclaimed a 1940s promotional poster, advertising one of the Swedish Angel's matches. "The Closest Thing to a Netherthal Man. A Puzzle to Scientists! But a Monster in the Ring ... Ugliest Wrestler in the World!"

With the advent of television, such poster campaigns fell by the wayside. Regional wrestling promoters were able to secure broadcast deals in their local market and could cheaply produce programming simply by filming the events they were running. As TV

The French Angel with model Dorian Leigh, and The Undertaker

brought wrestling into more households, promoters emphasized character development to bring paying fans into arenas.

Soon, takeoffs of classic movie monsters such as Willie Farkus, who wrestled as "The Hungarian Wolfman," began earning notoriety. Claiming he had been raised by a den of wolves, Farkus would be led to the ring in chains and unleashed upon his opponents, before being shackled again and taken back to the dressing room.

Wrestler and promoter Martin Koradigan of Argentina took the monster gimmick to an even more absurd level in the early 1970s, introducing characters such as El Cavernario (The Cavernman) and Yokanka the Space Creature. But Koradigan's most successful act was La Momia, an invincible mummy who vanquished opponents with a nerve hold. On October 22, 1972, more than 22,000 fans turned out to see Koradigan battle La Momia in Buenos Aires.

As far as weird masked monsters go, the Memphis territory was notorious for churning them out too, particularly from the '70s through the early '80s. In addition to wrestling mummies and the lumbering Or Frank, Memphis introduced such characters as The Kaiser (inspired by Gene Simmons from KISS, with demonic face paint and elevator boots) and the tag team of Lucifer and the Prince of Darkness, who wore matching red bodysuits, had horns on their heads and carried pitchforks. Several territories also had versions of Frankenstein's monster or werewolves—usually mid-card wrestlers in hokey latex masks.

According to Jim Mitchell, who spent more than a decade managing wrestling monsters, the key to longevity for "horror wrestlers" is in the way they are presented.

"In order to make any supernatural-type gimmick work, you need to have a manager make all of the outlandish claims. That way, the wrestler always has plausible deniability," he explains. "If the promotion says, 'Oh my god, it's a real monster,' it's never going to work. You've got to give them the Scooby-Doo ending and unmask the monster so everything makes sense. Once the promotion tries to present the supernatural as real, then it loses credibility and people lose interest. But if you have some explanation at the end of the story arc—the manager was working a hoax, someone else was in on it, something to figuratively 'unmask' the monster—then it can work."

Mitchell, who debuted his persona as a satanic wrestling manager named The

“YOU’VE GOT TO GIVE THEM THE *SCOOBY-DOO* ENDING AND UNMASK THE MONSTER SO EVERYTHING MAKES SENSE.” JIM MITCHELL



Confirmed Combatants: (clockwise from top left) Wicked wrestler Pape Shango, satanic wrestling manager Jim "The Sinister Minister" Mitchell, mummy Prince Khans in one of his trademark dust-ups, and (opposite) Abdullah the Butcher eye gouging his opponent.

Sinister Minister in the original Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW) in 1989, spent his career acting as the evil mouthpiece of Mortal Kombat-themed fighter adorned in skulls, Abyss (a hulking man-monster from "Paris Unknown") and Prince Khans (palled as a 3,000-year-old Egyptian mummy). During this time, he also learned a few things about the challenges of working with costumed characters.

"The first time we put Prince Khans on television, he was too white for the cameras," Mitchell recalls. "He washed out like a flare. We put talcum powder all over him so dust would fly whenever someone hit him. After that, we would go to the filthiest place of whatever building we were in and roll him around in the dirt. And he never washed the gear, which made him a real pleasure to work with."

Not all wrestlers were playing their "monster" characters for laughs or for camp, though. A tried-and-true mantra in wrestling is "red equals green"—blood brings money. As illustrated in the Academy Award-nominated film *The Wrestler*, blood capsules aren't used for these effects. To achieve the so-called "crimson mask," wrestlers use a small razor blade to "gig" or "bleed" themselves, usually their forehead. Depending on the length and depth of the gash, and how heavily the wrestler is sweating, he can usually control roughly how much blood he spills.

Some wrestlers, most notably Abdullah the Butcher, make a career out of their willingness to bleed. Easily identified by the lines of scar tissue that make his forehead look like a salt map of the Grand Canyon, Abdullah assures fans that the ring is caked with sticky red plasma by the time the final bell rings.

Though he was born in Windsor, Ontario, Larry Shreve has billed himself as "The Madman from the Sudan" Abdullah the Butcher since 1958. For more than 40 years, Abdullah has carved up the foreheads of his opponents with sharpened forks, and cultivated an image as a bloodthirsty cannibal. At 69-years-old,

he continues to compete today. He also owns a restaurant, Abdullah the Butcher's House of Ribs and Chinese Food, in Atlanta, Georgia. Stop by and The Butcher will gladly pose for a photo, though he'll usually hold a fork to your forehead or eyeball.

According to Abdullah, it's all about having confidence in the gimmick to sell the horror.

"You have to believe in yourself," he says. "If you don't believe in what you're doing or the character you're presenting, you'll never make the fans believe in it. It's just like being an actor. You have to convince yourself before you can ever convince others."

As these monsters were rising to prominence in the late '70s and early '80s, the WWF was promoting mostly family-friendly fare, and shying away from the bloodiest "horror gimmick" wrestlers. Then in 1985, the WWF signed Kamala, the Ugandan Headhunter.

Jim Hams was born in Mississippi, but was given the gimmick of Ugandan cannibal while he was competing in



BRING THE PAIN

TOP 5 WRESTLER SMACKDOWNS IN HORROR MOVIES

1 JESSE VENTURA IN *PREDATOR* (1987)

Before he was the governor of Minnesota, Jesse "The Body" Ventura was a flamboyant WWF icon, and then an actor, who appeared alongside Arnold Schwarzenegger as the tobacco-chomewit, heavy artillery-clinging blatin in the soldiers vs. alien hunters film *Predator*.

BEST TAUNT: "I ain't got time to bleed."

FINISHING MOVE: A six-barrel galling gun levels the bad guys, and a good section of the jungle.



2 TOR JOHNSON IN *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* (1959)

Swedish professional wrestler Tor Johnson (aka a. The Super Swedish Angel) had a long career in film, including Ed Wood's *Bride of the Monster* (1955) and *Night of the Ghouls* (1959), but is probably best known as loquacious Dan Clay in Wood's *Plan 9*. In Tim Burton's Wood bio pic, he was portrayed by another ring vet, George "The Animal" Steele.

BEST TAUNT: "I'm a big boy now, Johnny."

FINISHING MOVE: After being double-teamed in a graveyard by vampires and a Bela Lugosi stand-in, Johnson goes down for the count, only to return as a lumbering zombie.

3 ROWDY RODDY PIPER IN *THEY LIVE* (1988)

WWF legend Rowdy Roddy Piper stars in John Carpenter's cautionary sci-fi horror shocker as George Huxley, a laborer in LA who finds a pair of sunglasses that reveal a world full of subliminal advertising and skull-faced aliens disguised as humans. (Also see 1986's *Hell Comes to Frogtown* for more of Piper punching through collared and talking numbers.)

BEST TAUNT: "I have come here to chew bubblegum and kick ass... and I'm all out of bubblegum."

FINISHING MOVE: The epic five-minute fist fight between Piper and co-star Keith David that was originally scripted to last twenty seconds but reportedly impressed Carpenter so much he left it in.



4 DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE IN *THE DEVIL'S REEL* (2005)

Page plays Sissy Ray Snapper who, along with human road map Darryl Trije, forms The Unholy Two—a bounty-hunting duo dispatched to find the Frisky family—in Rob Zombie's blood-soaked feature.

BEST TAUNT: "They're gonna think goddamn King Kong came down from Skull Island and raped them a new fuckin' asshole."

FINISHING MOVE: In a classic reversal, Page shocks a woman in the forehead when she makes a move for a gun during a motel tussle.

5 TRIPLE H IN *BLADE: TRINITY* (2004)

WWE grappler Triple H plays Jaxxon Grimwood, a vampire thug with silver-clipped fangs in the third *Blade* movie, which sees him go toe-to-toe with wise-cracking bloodsucker-cum-vampire hunter Hannibal King (Ryan Reynolds).

BEST TAUNT: "Spit it out, you fucking fuckwad!"

FINISHING MOVE: After trading haymakers, then power-slammings King, Triple H is rendered ashen when his sterling choppers are punched into his skull.



the Memphis territory. The schtick was similar to that of Abdullah the Butcher, in that both men were massive, bloodthirsty savages, but Kamala was much more athletic, dazzling fans with standing vertical leapfrogs and dives off the top rope, even though he weighed nearly 400 pounds at his heaviest. Kamala had some bloody feuds with Abdullah, Andre the Giant and Sgt. Slaughter prior to his WWF run, but the Kamala who faced Hulk Hogan for the WWF world title in 1986 and again in 1987 was more of a PG-rated headhunter. Like Abdullah, Harris continues to compete on the independent circuit today, more than 25 years after he debuted the Kamala character.

"A lot of people felt I would be ashamed to wear a [ceremonial wood-carved African] mask and put on that face paint when I first came out as Kamala, but I'm telling you it felt great and it still feels great," Harris says. "It was the easiest gimmick I ever had. The hardest part was just finding room to put on the war paint before the match. I would come to the ring and people would run away from me. I'd never chase them, but they would run. Today, I get emails all the time from people telling me how much I terrified them when they were kids. I've enjoyed every minute of it."

By the late 1980s, as the influence of the slasher genre grew, wrestling rolled out its own versions of contemporary boogymen, including Freddy Krueger (*Nightmare Freddy*), Jason Voorhees (Jason the Terrible) and Leatherface (*Leatherface*). For one memorable match in the Japanese *WING* promotion, it was horror in all four corners of the ring as *Nightmare Freddy* teamed with The Crypt Keeper against Leatherface and Boogie Man (wearing a Michael Myers mask).

In 1990, the WWF introduced a horror wrestler who would eventually become one of the biggest draws of all time: The Un-

HONOURABLE MENTIONS:

- Hatless mangler Kane catches bears on the end of his meat hook and keeps their eyes as trophies in *See No Evil*.
- Former WCW/WWF heavyweight champion Bill Goldberg opens his famous can of whoop-ass as Killer Claus in the hilariously incoherent holiday horror *Santa's Slay*.
- Former wrestler Tyler Mane squeezes his six-foot-nine, 275-pound frame into the role of Michael Myers for Rob Zombie's *Halloween* movies.

TREVOR TUMINSKI

OUR RESIDENT WRASSLIN' FAN GOES
ONE-ON-ONE WITH DAVID HEATH,
BEST KNOWN AS THE BLOODSUCKING
GRAPPLER **GANGREL**.

INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE

BY AARON VOX EDITION

HOW DID YOU CREATE THIS CHARACTER?

I've been playing a vampire for a long time, but Gangrel was the character I always wanted to become. Before Gangrel, I was the Vampire Warrior in the early '90s and my style was kind of hardcore wrestling. I was wrestling a lot in Puerto Rico where no one would have really seen me. My matches were always totally crazy and were basically a bloodbath. We didn't think of things like HIV back then!

HOW DID YOU END UP IN THE WWE?

Basically what happened was I was sitting with my wife Luna [Vachon, former WWE wrestler] watching *The Lost Boys*—I just love that movie—and we both thought it would be a cool idea for a wrestler, like *The Lost Boys* meets Gene Simmons from KISS. So I became the Vampire Warrior, then in 1998 [WWE writers] Bruce Pritchard and Vince Russo saw me and they signed me to the company because they saw potential with my character. They were the ones who helped develop it into Gangrel, and make me this kind of dark, rebellious figure.

WERE YOU ALWAYS SO INFLUENCED BY THE HORROR GENRE?

Well, for the most part, all of my characters have been influenced by horror. Even when I started out in Stampede Wrestling I was in a tag team called The Blackhearts and we wore black masks without any holes for our eyes or mouths or anything. Our finishing move "The Head Spinner," was based on the images in *Jacob's Ladder* of the guys with the spinning, shaking heads. We had that dark and mysterious feeling. I've been into horror my whole life.

DO YOU DO ANYTHING TO "GET INTO CHARACTER" BEFORE A MATCH?

I don't really have to "get into character" to become Gangrel. I know this is going to sound weird but Gangrel is who I really am on the inside. The character helps me to really be myself, in terms of my outlook on society and that kind of thing. At home everyone thinks I'm just this nice guy but there's so much anger-craziness inside me. If it wasn't for Gangrel, I'd probably end up in jail.

HOW DOES HAVING A HORROR-THEMED CHARACTER AFFECT YOUR CAREER? DOES IT LIMIT YOU TO CERTAIN TYPES OF OPPONENTS AND STORYLINES?

There's a positive and a negative. Being a vampire gets you typecast because people will always see you as that character, and you will never get away from it even if you want to. [WWE star] Kane will never get away from being a monster and The Undertaker will never get away from being The Deadman. But on the other hand, people will always remember the character, which means there's always an opportunity for me somewhere. There's always room for a vampire in the ring, I guess.

IS THERE A PARTICULAR 'TYPE' OF WRESTLER THAT YOU WORK BETTER WITH? ANOTHER HORROR-THEMED GRAPPLER OR PERHAPS SOMEONE WITH NO GIMMICK?

Honestly, the opponent's gimmick is not that important. Some of my best matches in the WWE were with Steve Blackman, who was just a no-gimmick martial arts guy. For some reason we just always matched up well.

WHAT ABOUT ANOTHER VAMPIRE-THEMED WRESTLER, LIKE VAMPIRO?

That guy is an idiot. He was saying some stuff like I stole his character and that he was going to beat me up for it. Then we ran into each other in Japan and he ended up carrying my bags.

WHAT IS THE MOST MEMORABLE HORROR-THEMED STORYLINE THAT YOU HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN?

Oh, that has to be the Ministry of Darkness, in the WWE, when I was with The Brood [a goth wrestling team featuring Gangrel along with WWE stars Edge and Christian] and we joined The Undertaker's satanic army. I actually had a really scary moment during that storyline. It was after The Brood left the Ministry and we were in a match where the Acelytes tag team put a whole noose around me and hung me from it. The thing is, it was a brand new rope and new ropes have no give to them and it was literally choking the life out of me. I thought I was going to die. But of course, I've always said that TV is the best place to die. ☹



dertaker Mark Calaway debuted as a towering, death-obsessed morbid man who was seemingly impervious to pain. Part western undertaker, part undead zombie, he barely registered his opponents' punches or kicks, and sat up robotically after taking most foes' patented finishing moves. Just like the stereotypical movie slasher, he kept coming back for more. Upping the mystique, Calaway never broke character, even in interviews outside of the wrestling media and, more recently, has declined interview requests entirely, preserving his air of mystery.

Originally a bad guy corralled by a pale-faced manager named Paul Bearer, The Undertaker became a fan favorite as he feuded with the WWF's other man-monsters. After losing a "casket match" in 1993, the cheese factor went through the roof as he "rose to heaven" (a stuntman dressed in a white version of the wrestler's black costume was raised to the arena rafters). The character was then taken off television for several months until "The Million Dollar Man" Ted Dibiase introduced a new Undertaker (portrayed by Brian Lee, who eventually became known as The Under-faker), leading the original Undertaker to "return from the dead" in a battle against the imposter.

The WWF also debuted another short-lived but memorable character in Papa Shango, a Voodoo priest who carried a smoking skull to the ring and cast spells on his opponents.

Near the end of the decade, wrestling moved away from such cartoonish storylines and tried to present more cutting-edge, adult-oriented characters. In 1998, a vampire (Gangrel, portrayed by David Heath, see sidebar) and another Boogeyman (Marty Wright) joined the WWF roster. Both wrestlers made a big splash but vanished a short time later. In most cases, promoters were unable to come up with long-term booking plans and placed them in ridiculous storylines, or the wrestlers were unable to maintain character in interviews or in public.

"Wrestlers need to be protected in the same way as Jason and Freddy and all of those characters need to be protected," says Jim Mitchell. "Those movie monsters started off as badasses, then became cartoons. They became a parody of themselves by becoming ironic and kind of winking at the audience, and too many wrestlers do that today."

Taking their personas even further, many macabre manglers would attempt to seal their victories with a suitably horror-centric "finishing move," such as The Undertaker's pleading finale "The Tombstone," Abdullahi's "Sudanese Meat Cleaver," or Gangrel's "Blood Spit," a tactic he'd use to temporarily blind his opponents by spitting fake blood in their faces.

More creature-themed performers appeared after the millennium. In 2006, WWE re-introduced the ECW brand on Syfy, in an effort to attract science-fiction viewers. The first match of the new show featured The Sandman (a beer-swilling bleeder known for bashing people with kendo sticks, and for wrestling legitimately hammered) against The Zombie (a dirt-covered *Night of the Living Dead* reject wearing a flannel shirt and jeans). Kevin Thorn and his busty valet Anel portrayed vampires but were never promoted as having supernatural powers, but rather as a kinky couple who got off on drinking blood.

Perhaps inevitably, the violence and gore in wrestling matches has escalated in recent years, giving birth to a subgenre of grappling dubbed "hardcore wrestling," which aims for shock value above athletics. Staged maimings involving unusual foreign objects—barbed wire, fluorescent light tubes, broken glass and even fire—have become the order of the day as wrestling struggles to outdo itself for increasingly desensitized audiences.

Mitchell, who left the business to pursue a singing career, sees strong parallels between the evolution of wrestling and the evolution of horror films.

"Wrestling used to be about a slow build with some suspense, just like horror movies," he laments. "Today, you have torture-porn horror, like *Hostel*. It's like a wrestling match where you have blood and thumbtacks and tables and guys jumping off the ceiling in the first five minutes. You have to keep topping yourself to the point where everyone becomes numb to what you're doing." ☛



Ring Bearer: (From left) *Nightmare Freddy* and *The Crypt Keeper* vs. *Leftehorse* and *Boogie Man*, Komala only eats what he kills, and *The Zombie*'s vacant stare.



AWARD-WINNING ARTIST

DANIEL HORNE

BUILT AN UNLIKELY CAREER ON CLASSIC
CREATURE OIL PAINTINGS, BUT HIS MONSTERS
WON'T BE CHAINED TO JUST ONE MEDIUM.

The CANVAS CANNOT HOLD THEM!

by GARY PULLIN

DANIEL HORNE

M

OST MONSTERS ARE BORN IN A LABORATORY, A GRAVEYARD OR THE PITS OF HELL, BUT FOR DANIEL HORNE IT ALL STARTED IN CHURCH.

"I think probably somewhere or somehow it came from there," explains the acclaimed monster artist. "My first experience with art as a theme of expression was with the stations of the cross. They were all around the cathedral, and during the mass I would just look at them. I'd read and follow the story in the books. Of course, the pictures and the icons were all there."

During those formative years, the New Jersey-based Horne also saw the classic Universal horror movies and fell in love with fantastic creatures. He identified with the tragic heroes and misguided monsters, although, his Catholic parents didn't much approve of his fascination with horror films. Even magazines such as *Famous Monsters of Filmland* were forbidden. But nothing was going to keep the burgeoning "Monster Kid" away from the genre he loved and, fortunately, he had a friend on his side.

"This was around 1968, and my aunt — she was a big horror freak — used to

sneak the magazines to me in her go-go boots!" he recalls.

After Horne finished art school — where he apprenticed under renowned landscape/wildlife/western-themed painter Ken Laeger — he began his career as a freelancer, painting more than 400 book covers in oils for nearly every major publishing house. Although few of those were specifically horror, he eventually became known for his classical style and love for all things ghastly. Although he's done portraits of the zombies from 1971's *Tombs of the Blind Dead*, Horne almost exclusively sticks to the Golden Age of Horror, avoiding darker, more contemporary material.

"The torture porn or mass murder stuff isn't my cup of tea," he affirms. "I guess I just don't quite understand it. Even when I consciously try to do something dark, a little bit of humor sneaks in and kind of cancels it. [The] monster characters that I grew up with are so ingrained in



Monster Bust-Up: (clockwise from top) masks of Charles Laughton as the Marchioness and Boris Karloff in Peter Jackson's *Ring*; busts from *Tombs of the Blind Dead*; Boris Karloff as *White Zombie*; and (top) Horne's oil painting of Vincent Price as Dr. Phibes.



me. Although one [recent] film I really enjoyed was *May*. I watch that constantly. I don't know if I would call it a "horror" film, but, again, the main character is this demented person."

Given Home's sensibilities and style, it's no surprise that his art heroes are mostly American painters from the 19th century, including John Waterhouse, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema and Howard Pyle, as well as French painter Jean-Léon Gérôme and 20th-century American illustrator Norman Rockwell. Home also notes the influence that the recently deceased Frank Frazetta had on him as a budding artist. "[His work] is wonderful, exotic, sensual, immaculate and comic. It had everything in it. It didn't influence me stylistically, but it made me think out of the box and be aware that there is more than just one way to paint. At a time when an influence is critical to a young artist, it created this perfect storm."

Despite his influences and choice of subject matter, Home is far from being stuck in the past. He says that while his heart is still in oil paintings and he employs the format whenever possible, a large number of his works have now been rendered digitally.

"One Christmas my wife bought me [Corel] Painter 9," he recalls. "I just fooled around and had varied success with it. I use it now on some things when the client's budget won't allow for oil painting, or it needs to be done literally overnight. The idea was to replicate my oil painting style in digital."

He cites his *War of the Worlds* cover illustration for *Rue Morgue* as an ideal example of being able to work quickly in the digital realm. The medium allowed him to complete the commission in a few days rather than a few weeks.

Another of Home's recent magazine covers, an image of Boris Karloff created for *Monsters from the Vault*, won a Rondo Award this year (his second). He says almost 100 percent of his oil paintings are sold to collectors now, and with the return of *Famous Monsters* he sees himself benefitting from the resurgence of classic creatures.

"I just think the classics are named that for a reason," he says. "There is this mystique of the 'Monster Kid,' which I am. I grew up in the '60s. I was the target audience the first time *Famous Monsters* came around. Now, it's a new generation. I have kids of my own that are eighteen and 22, and they've warmed up to all that stuff."

More recently, Home has found other ways to keep those classic creatures alive. He became hooked on sculpting after being invited to a convention that featured monster masks. He decided to give the new medium a shot and admits that he was surprised at how quickly he took to it.

"I made my first latex mask over a year ago, and it has exploded," he says. "I now have fifteen different characters, from classic monsters to my own creations."

He believes that his affinity for sculpting is a natural extension of another talent that he inherited: doll making.

"I used to sit down on the steps of my mother's studio and I would watch all this wonderful art being

Creature Craft: (clockwise from top left) oil painting of Oliver Reed in The Curse of the Werewolf; an Analogue of the Succubus; doll masks of the Gill-men, Godzilla, an alien; version of Frankenstein's monster; a fly with a black widow in Henry & June; and (opposite) oil painting of Lord Dunsany Jr. from The Hound of the Baskervilles



made," he remembers. "The subject matter wasn't my thing, but there would be people sculpting, moulding, making outfits, painting, and I guess in the back of my mind, it kind of stuck."

Over the past few years, Horne has constructed fantastic models of his favourite fiends, including incredible life-size, movie-accurate sculptures of Boris Karloff and Elsa Lanchester. And with a licence agreement for Lon Chaney, we can expect to see more.

"Everything I do with painting, sculptures or life-size busts starts off with a sketch," he details. "Once I have a direction I want to go in, I gather my reference material. I'll make an aluminum wire armature that's articulated and moves the way a real skeleton moves. That way, I can pose it. Once the armatures are made, everything starts with the head. Then I move onto the hands and the boots. The clay I use for my doll making is called Super Sculpey, which you bake in the oven. It's a beautiful medium. I use wool batting cut in strips [to build] the body form and the muscles."

One look at his craftsmanship and it's easy to see he's already got it down to a mad science, including the clothing.

"I picked up sewing by just being around my mother in that environment – the ability to make patterns and sew. No one in my house touches my sewing machine. That's my domain!" ☺





ANY PEOPLE HAVE AT LEAST ONE STORY ABOUT MONSTROUS ROOMMATES, BUT TOBY WHITHOUSE, WRITER AND CREATOR OF BRITISH SUPERNATURAL TV SHOW *BEING HUMAN* HAS MORE THAN MOST.

The hour-long program chronicles the day-to-day lives of a vampire, Mitchell, and a werewolf, George, who decide to share a house in order to better fit in with humanity – only to discover that it's haunted by Annie, the ghost of a young woman who died there under mysterious circumstances.

Whithouse began his career as an actor, and started writing in his time between shows. After a number of steady scribbling gigs, he was eventually invited to write for the relaunched UK sci-fi classic *Doctor Who*. The success of that revamped series basically paved the way for *Being Human*. Before the relaunch, sci-fi – and especially horror – were very much poor relations in the British TV market.

Whithouse recalls, "It was the genre that dare not speak its name, and then *Doctor Who* came back and was a massive success, and suddenly they were much more amenable to the idea of high-concept shows."

Being Human, however, originally started out as a much smaller concept.

"I was approached by an independent TV company that wanted to do a show about a group of college friends who buy a house together," he says. "I wasn't

particularly inspired by the idea, but completely unbidden, I had these ideas for three characters, who were at this stage completely human."

Mitchell, he says, was initially a recovering sex addict, Annie was battling agoraphobia and George had some serious anger issues. The team liked the characters but were still having trouble finding a story for the pilot.

"This went on for months and months and months," says Whithouse, "until eventually we decided we were going to have one last meeting and then if nothing came of that, we'd give it up. In this meeting we were getting nowhere, [so] I said, 'What we could do is make George a werewolf, because if nothing else, that would give us a story for the first episode.' And then it seemed like a very natural progression, if he was a werewolf, then Mitchell should be a vampire and Annie should be a ghost. So, suddenly, by the end of the meeting I was doing a drama about a werewolf, a vampire and a ghost sharing a house."

The plot was put together on a tiny budget, which meant that the team wasn't able to use CGI, even in the scenes where George transforms into a werewolf.

"We kind of rather reluctantly said, 'Oh, no, we're going to have to do it with, you know, prosthetics and animatronics and so on,'" says Whithouse.

When the pilot proved to be a success – an online petition to turn the show into a series was started by TV critic Marni Bahar, who gathered approximately 3000 signatures – and production resumed, the original organic effects were retained. As such, the final transformation scene remains reminiscent of the award-winning special effects of *An American Werewolf in London*.

"I'm absolutely thrilled that we did it that way," notes Whithouse, "because I think it all kind of adds to the character of the show and its individuality."

One aspect of *Being Human* that did shift between the pilot and the series was the way that the vampire clan was portrayed. Unlike Mitchell, who has learned to survive without killing, the other vampires in the first season – out on Region 1 DVD July 20 – are hell-bent on world domination. They're led by the chilling William Hickey, the vampire who turned Mitchell.

"The ambition of the show has always been, if these creatures existed, then what would their lives really be like?" explains Whithouse. "We felt that they would be people who would be living under the radar, on the edge of society, having these kind of ancillary jobs. ... But suddenly, in the pilot, when we got into the world of the vampires, it was like we'd suddenly gone into a different show entirely. The vampires just weren't in the same world as the rest of the show; the vampires were very kind of Anne Rice. And even though Adrian Lester, who played Hickey in the pilot, was absolutely fantastic, we felt that, ironically, the vampires were wrong for the rest of the show. So when we went into the series, the first thing we wanted to do was to make them a little more real, kind of more mundane."

This mundane quality is where much of the show's appeal lies; the characters are remarkable for their normalcy – Mitchell (Adam Turner) and George (Russell Tovey) are hospital porters, Annie (Lenora Crichlow) habitually makes tea and even Hickey (Jason Watkins) works as a police officer during the day. In fact, one of the key themes of the series is that the line between what is "human" and what is "monsterous" is often pretty thin. The way that humans behave toward each other and the three protagonists in the series can frequently be as violent and shocking as any of Hickey's tribe of undead killers. What is it, then, that ultimately makes a character monstrous?

"A lack of compassion," offers Whithouse. "A lack of compassion and – how can I put it? I guess somebody who's self-serving."

At the end of season one, for example, George is about to transform in order to battle Hickey one-on-one so that Mitchell doesn't have to; George makes the point that humanity is about love and sacrifice, and so the violence of what he is about to do doesn't rob him of his humanity, it actually proves it.

Of course, the "good" monster – the vampire with a soul, the werewolf with a conscience – has become very prevalent on TV over the past fifteen years. But *Being Human* breaks those old myths to give monster fans a few fresh touches. One of the best instances of reinvention is a terrifying scene at the beginning of the third episode where Mitchell explains what happens to George physically during a transformation. Among other horrors, he has a heart attack, and kidney and liver failure, because his human organs need to shrink in order to turn into those of the wolf.

"Narratively, what we needed was to explain the horror and the pain of the transformation so you fully understand the ramifications of this thing," says Whithouse, who also reworked the traditional vampire mythology for the series. "I think that the notion of this very dark, moody, and usually very beautiful man who has done terrible things and is now regretting them and feeling guilty is a very romantic ideal. ... The vampires in *Being Human* are very different from the vampires in *True Blood* or the ones in *Let the Right One In* or whatever – the vampire mythology is so rich that you have to cherry-pick which bits you're going to use."

One of the myths that Whithouse was determined to keep, for example, was the idea of vampires not being able to be seen on film, or to leave reflections.

"My producer's heart sank when I told him that," he remembers, "because he said production-wise, that's an absolute nightmare. But the thing is, I really wanted it, and it's something that we've actually used narratively throughout. But the bottom line always had to be what gave us the best story, for all three archetypes."

As *Being Human* goes into production on its third season this summer and an American remake has also been announced, the stories of Mitchell, George and Annie promise to retain their bite. But which of the three monsters does Whithouse himself most identify with?

"Probably the vampires," he says, "because as a writer, I don't see much sunlight."

being human

Everyday Monsters:
(from top) The werewolf George (played in human form by Russell Tovey), Adam Turner as the vampire Mitchell, and Lenora Crichlow as Annie the ghost



THEY GROW UP SO FAST...

SPLICE

Starring Sarah Polley, Adrien Brody and Déborah Chénac
Directed by Vincenzo Natali
Written by Vincenzo Natali, Antonette Terry Bryant
and Doug Taylor
81

"You can pick your friends, but you can't pick your family" is a concept that definitely gets put under the microscope in Cube director Vincenzo Natali's long-gestating sci-fi/horror film *Splice*.

Adrien Brody (*Kung Fu remakes*) and Sarah Polley (*Dawn of the Dead remake*) star as Clive and Elsa, hotshot geneticists whose bold experiments splicing together the DNA of various animals have won them acclaim. But when their next challenge — combining animal and human DNA — is thwarted by their corporate benefactors, the ambitious couple goes ahead anyway. The result is Dren, a rapidly growing humanoid creature whose place in her surrogate parents' lives mu-

lates from experiment to pet to de facto daughter to pseudo seductress. That Clive and Elsa's decision to go against nature ends in tragedy should not be surprising.

Splice works because Natali and his team take their obvious genre inspirations seriously, but they also have the good sense (and courage) to play with them. The sterility of the couple's lab recalls Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers*, Dren's mutations and libido bring to mind Clive Barker's *Nightbreed*, and even the names Clive and Elsa are nods to actors Colin Clive and Elsa Lanchester, stars of *The Bride of Frankenstein*. But the sum of *Splice*'s influences is, like Dren, something new entirely.

And let's talk about Dren Abigail Chu (as young Dren) and Déborah Chénac (as grown Dren) evoke both empathy for the creature's plight as a scientific mistake and fear when we realize the malevolent side of her/its power. (Chénac, especially, gives a bold performance, embodying childlike playfulness, adult sexuality and animal fury.) And that the actors do so under heavy prosthetics and computer manipulation is to be commended.

But beyond the effects, *Splice*'s real value is in its ability to illustrate the horrors of the modern family. Clive and Elsa argue about whether or not to have children as they "give birth" to Dren, the creature's rapid growth takes her from fussy baby to sulky teen almost overnight, and her desire to leave home mirrors adolescence. It's a brilliant metaphor in a smart film that never forgets that it's a creature feature, too.

SEAN PLUMMER

YOUR KRUEGER COMPANION

NEVER SLEEP AGAIN: THE ELM STREET LEGACY

Starring Heather Langenkamp, Wes Craven
and Robert Englund
Directed by Daniel Farrands and Andrew Kasch
Written by Thorey Hulse
1428 Films

Elm Street fans underwhelmed by the unimaginative new reboot of Wes Craven's seminal masterpiece will be hard-pressed to contain their glee while viewing the remarkably well-made *Never Sleep Again: The Elm Street Legacy*. Running a monumental four hours, this exceptional documentary provides an in-depth and entertaining look at all eight films in the *Nightmare* franchise (including *Freddy vs. Jason*) and the TV series (*Freddy's Nightmares*, 1988-90), before examin-



ing the lasting impact that *Elm Street's* resident dream stalker has had on pop culture.

Featuring never-before-seen footage, photos and storyboards, the program relies on more than 100 (sometimes candid) interviews with various cast and crew to explore the making of the films and the effect they had on those who created them. Wes Craven, New Line Cinema founder Robert Shaye, Robert England, Heather Langenkamp (also narrator and executive producer) and John Saxon make expected appearances, but lesser-known alumni such as actors Mark Patton and Lisa Wilcox weigh in, too. Directors Jack Sholder, Chuck Russell and Ronny Yu, makeup artists David Miller and Kevin Yagher, and rockers Alice Cooper (Freddy's father in the sixth installment) and Don Dokken (of *Dream Warriors* fame) also show up. No sign of Johnny Depp, Patricia Arquette and Laurence Fishburne, though.

A marked improvement over the production team's previous effort, *His Name Was Jason: 30 Years of Friday the 13th, Never Sleep Again's* lengthy runtime allowed co-directors Daniel Farrands and Andrew Kasch to delve into territory previously glossed over in DVD featurettes. Of particular interest are pre-production stills of makeup designs for actor

David Warner, who was originally slated to play Krueger, discussion of the gay subtext of *Part 2: Freddy's Revenge* and admissions by Craven and Shaye of their on-set feuds during the original film's production, not to mention their disapproval of the 2010 version.

The second disc is comprised of four more hours of extended cast and crew interviews, including music composer Charles Bernstein and renowned poster artist Matthew Joseph Peak. There's also a sneak preview of Langenkamp's own doc *I Am Nancy* and an episode of *Horror's Haunted Grounds*, which revisits key *Elm Street* locations. Incredibly comprehensive, *Never Sleep Again* will indeed surely keep Freddy fanatics up all night, eyes happily transfixed on the screen.

JAMES BURRELL

MOTIVATE THAT MURDERER!

DARK NATURE

Starring Vanya Erbe, Inogen Torner and Niall G. Fulton
Directed by Marc de Lauray
Written by Eddie Harrison
Troma

Don't be fooled by what's on the box: *Dark Nature* may bear the Troma label, but it ain't your Uncle Lloyd's signature style of Tax-tastic fare. In this psychological thriller, a woman and her family return to her mother's cottage in a remote village in rural Scotland, only to discover that Mom's apparently been murdered by the estate's psychotic gamekeeper McKenzie (Niall G. Fulton in an unsettling performance). What starts out as a relaxing family vacation quickly becomes a battle for survival, which takes a number of surprising and creative turns.

The main problem with *Dark Nature* lies in McKenzie's apparent lack of motivation for the killings; this isn't necessarily a bad thing, of course (nothing like a good old-fashioned, compulsive killing machine in human form). But when you've obviously worked really hard to es-

tablish your art house credentials with a stunningly shot piece of cinema, as director Marc de Lauray has, leaving the motivation of your killer open to the viewer's best guess seems less like holding a mirror up to the horrors inside your audience's mind and more like your garden variety glaring plot hole.



ABBREVIATED TERRORS



HORROR OF OUR LOVE A SHORT FILM

7 minutes

effwefilms.com

Painful, terrifying, disorienting — no doubt about it, falling in love can be a traumatic experience. And if you're a masked serial killer, chances are things will get even more complicated. Dave Reda's largely dialogue-free short *Horror of Our Love* — set to the song of the same name by alt-rock combo Ludo — showcases the efforts of a Jason Voorhees-esque psycho trying to woo one of his should-be victims. Needless to say, the course of true love doesn't run smoothly — but ultimately, there are only so many still-beating, blood-spattered hearts a girl can ignore, right? By turns whimsical and gruesome, *Horror of Our Love* is delightfully funny, gory and curiously touching.

CLAIRE HOPMELL



MASSACRATOR

4 minutes

massacurator.com

Ever wondered what would happen if Elvis came back to life to fight *The Terminator*? That question is answered in Montreal-based filmmaker Pierre Ayotte's *Massacurator*. The cultural clash in this love letter to movie sleaze that is incredibly entertaining and technically impressive, given its budgetary limitations. Obviously indebted to grindhouse

filmmaking, it's got that retro exploitation look, complete with jitter, grain and even some hysterical lo-fi stop-motion effects. The dialogue-free film is more about squirting blood, with pedal grooves and '70s-style split-screens than plot, but it's also hilarious and inventive from start to finish. A laugh-out-loud little short that establishes Pierre Ayotte as a talented purveyor of giddy, trashy entertainment.

PAUL BRONIN



SÉANCE

19 minutes

seance.cz

While *Séance* isn't a direct adaptation of Lovecraft's sorcery sequence, *Fungus* from *Muppet*, this beautifully crafted period piece from the Czech Republic definitely takes its cues from the author. It stars Klára Janová as Maria, a young clairvoyant hired to conduct a séance in an effort to locate some priceless jewelry the town's recently deceased baroness stashed in her castle. When her ritual efforts prove fruitless, she finds herself forced at knifepoint to enact a bizarre, ancient ritual with the cadaver. It's the second short from 22-year-old Robin Kolář, who is far more accomplished than his years would suggest. Keep an evil eye on this Eastern European whiz kid.

STUART F. ANDREWS



The Shadow Within: A child-led scene reveals what the dead really want: the living to join them.

In the special features, de Launay explains that his intention was for the ambiguity to allow the film to function on a number of levels, but some of these levels are far too subtle for their own good and, in the end, a deeply chilling character – and the genuinely shocking turn that closes the movie – are wasted through pure understatement.

Although the film is ultimately let down by its poor character development, *Dark Nature* is beautiful and creepy to look at; de Launay does an excellent job of building tension by juxtaposing the gorgeous Scottish scenery with a number of brutal, bloody kills. *Nature* here is truly tooth and claw, and humans are very much a part of it, however much they'd like to think they're above it.

CLAIRE HORSNELL

RACE WITH THE DRIVEL

HARD RIDE TO HELL

Starring Laura Mennell, Katharine Isabelle and Miguel Ferrer
Directed by Penelope Buitenhuis
Written by Matthew Chernov and David Rossak
Wizards

A long time ago I saw this movie about city folk vacationing in an RV. One night while camping, they accidentally witness a satanic ritual that ends in a blood sacrifice and they get chased across Texas by a horde of devil-worshipping rednecks. It's called *Race with the Devil*, and it rules. I've just now watched a movie that's almost a remake of that film, except that it also wants to be *The Hills Have Eyes* by way of John Carpenter's *Vampires*, while wasting the talents

of two of my favourite actors. It's called *Hard Ride to Hell* and it sucks moose balls. Not just any old moose balls either, but seriously sub-standard moose balls.

With undead bikers subbing for *Race*'s hell-bound *Hie-Haw* fans, *Hard Ride*'s first act unfolds more or less identically, before a heroic travelling knife salesman (?!) and a half-assed black magic showdown are tossed into the final reel for vanity. In my book, Miguel Ferrer (*Twin Peaks*, *Robo-Cop*) and Katharine Isabelle (*Ginger Snaps*) are normally two valid reasons to sit through virtually anything, but both are so horribly squandered here I could scarcely bear to watch.

Isabelle has publicly acknowledged the necessity of taking on shit roles for a paycheck, so I have to give her credit for at least making a solid effort, albeit a wasted one. (Even the perv factor is rendered moot here: the divine Ms. I makes her entrance in skimpy underwear and a tank top, and I don't even give a toss. How sad is that?)



Ferrer looks like he wants to throw himself under the RV he and the bikers are chasing, and I'm hard-pressed to blame him. Production values are decent, but the film is plagued by that old cinematic bugaboo, the Costume Designer Who Thinks Bikers and Wrestlers are interchangeable.

One curiosity about this dud is that Canadian filmmaker Penelope Buitenhuis has previously directed a number of acclaimed films in both

Canada and Europe, including the highly touted 2009 comedy-drama *A Wake*. I haven't checked out any of her other work yet, but I'm still curious to see what she's capable of when she's not slumming.

JOHN W. BOWEN

GUIDE TO THE OTHER SIDE

THE SHADOW WITHIN

Starring Laurence Belcher, Hayley J. Williams and Beth Winslet
Directed by Silvana Zancolo
Written by Silvana Zancolo, Daniel Aarons and Giovanni Escher
NTI

What would a mother do to bring back a dead child? Perhaps the question should be what wouldn't she do?

Set during WWII, *The Shadow Within* is a slow-burning supernatural tale that casts Beth Winslet (yes, Kate's little sister) as Dr. Prevost, the only physician in a diphtheria-plagued French town. She is especially concerned for the welfare of Maurice Oumont (Laurence Belcher), a young boy living on the outskirts of town with his overprotective mother Marie (Hayley J. Williams), who is still grieving the death of her stillborn son Jacques (Maurice's twin). Marie is approached by a group of local mothers who have also lost children to use Maurice, who



talks to Jacques, as a medium to communicate with their beloved departed youngster. But it turns out the dead don't want to cross over to our world – they want us to come to theirs.

Because of her famous sibling, Beth Winslet is the marquee name here, and she acquires herself well.

But it is newcomer Hayley J. Williams who stands out, provoking contempt for her ill treatment of Maurice and empathy for the profound grief she feels for her dead child. Young Belcher is also a major discovery, convincingly portraying the fear of a child terrorized by the ghost of a brother his mother loves more than him. The script, adapted from Pascal Francaux's novel *Les mères noires*, does a good job of evoking the suspicious nature of small-town life, where everyone knows everyone, and provides the cast with much eloquent dialogue.

Though *The Shadow Within* is a bit of a mish-mash – it has a British cast, is set in France but was filmed in Italy – ultimately it all works thanks to a strong script, solid acting, convincing art direction and rather ingenious special effects, despite the obviously low budget. (Maurice's haunting is portrayed by animated shadows that look like creeping charcoal etchings – it's an elegant, mildly disturbing effect.)

Director Silvana Zancolo does what he can to sabotage his film — blocking shots awkwardly, making poor editing choices — but even he can't ruin the spooky visuals and creeping sense of foreboding he's managed to create.

SEAN PLUMMER

LADY KILLERS

WOMEN'S STUDIES

Starring Judith O'Dea, Cindy Marie Martin and Tara Garwood
Written and directed by Lonnie Martin
R-Squared Films

"The future is female — and she's pissed off," proclaimed the T-shirts of braless women's libbers in the 1970s. Well, in *Women's Studies* she's not only pissed off, but running around with heavy weaponry, hacking at the tackle of any male hapless enough to cross her Goddess-given path.

The journey into warped womanhood begins with an aborted road trip. Washington intern/college student Mary (Cindy Marie Martin), who's travelling with her best friend Beth and boyfriend Zack, has her car stolen mid-trip, forcing them to stay at a mysterious, secluded all-women college. Called the Ross-Prentiss Academy, it turns out to be a hotbed of uber-radical feminism, populated by psychotic killer witch-girls intent on converting Mary to their cause.

Women's Studies is not a perfect movie by any means; although it's well shot and well acted, there are a few wince-worthy leaps of logic in the script. But writer/director Lonnie Martin has worked hard to turn the basic "crazy hillbilies bump off naive city kids" plot into a watchable movie that plays with ideas about female empowerment. Sure, the exploitation-by-numbers stuff is all here — killer strippers: check; psychotic lesbians: check; eye-watering anesthesia-free penectomy scene: check — but the principal female characters have a nice level of depth to them, and even the psychos are given believable back stories, which allows the audience to feel a degree of sympathy for them.

The core strength of the film is that it places the characters along a continuum of ideology, rather than setting up a binary. Mary uses feminist theory to work for social change, the women at the Ross-Prentiss Academy use it to justify mutilation and murder. The movie doesn't judge the goals of feminism based on its looper proponents, which is refreshing. What it does condemn is the way in which ideas that start out based on principles of liberation and justice can become perverted and used for oppression and abuse.

The overall relevance of *Women's Studies* is a bit dubious, since radical feminism has basically been dead in the water for the past 30-odd years, but it still offers an interesting take on a subgenre standard.

CLAIRE HORSNELL



OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE GETS HACKED

THE PENIS MIGHTIER



COCKHAMMER

Hack Movies

Welcome to the weird, weird world of Hack Movies, the tranchid of truly disturbed writer/director Kevin Strange, who has been pumping out ultra-low-budget horror-comedies since 2006. His latest, *Cockhammer*, deals with demented, OCD-affected snuff-porn producer Norman Cockhammer, who lives himen to abduct hookers. He then carves the women up with a chainsaw during demonic rituals aimed at making him a god. His only weakness is a mystical blade-equipped dildo, which a couple of stoners conjure up — with the help of transvestite demons! — in order to save their slutty girlfriends from Cockhammer's evil clutches. Rite with rapid-fire jokes, cheesy gore effects and more masturbation scenes than you can shake a soggy Kleenex at — *Cockhammer* satisfyingly busts guts and nuts aplenty!

BODY COUNT: 8

USE OF THE F-BOMB: 46

SCHEMING OF A GREEN CHRISTMAS

NIXON AND HOGAN SMOKE CHRISTMAS

Hack Movies



Warning! If you want to preserve your memories of Santa Claus being a jolly old elf, avoid this movie! But if you'd rather see St. Nick as a foul-mouthed, pot-smoking zombie who's as hungry for brains as he is for a piece of ass, you're in luck. It's Christmas Eve in Strangerville, where a very fucked-up Kris Kringle, who got into some bad weed and turned into a zombie, enlists the help of brain-dead stoners Nixon and Hogan to help him finish his deliveries, even though it means busting warlocks, tentacle-flopping minions and a slutty witch named Sarpantha. Overall, it's a riotous mix of weed, wanking, spurring blood and punctured poop-chutes — and if that isn't the true meaning of Christmas, I don't know what is.

BODY COUNT: 8

USE OF THE F-BOMB: 161

AN OFFICER, NOT A GENTLEMAN

COLONEL KILL MOTHERFUCKERS

Hack Movies



Leave it to Hack to dig up the done-to-death slasher-in-the-woods story and ass-fuck it just for old times sake. *Colonel Kill Motherfuckers* follows an army officer who's accidentally killed by gamers who are goofing around in the forest. After the dorks bury him in a shallow grave, the Colonel's torturously creepy transvestite "mother" resurrects him and sends him out to take revenge. This is yet another entertaining flick packed with hilarious gore (a guy is forced to eat his own face!), numerous references to *Buffy* (oddy) and a scene that'll show you how to tell the future with your own poof(?). But best of all, it's probably the only film ever made that features a person getting killed with a giant lollipop. Need I say more?

BODY COUNT: 9

USE OF THE F-BOMB: 169

LAST CHANCE LANCE

**SALVAGE
CHANNELS
REAL-LIFE BRITISH
FEARS INTO A
SUBURBAN
SIEGE STORY.**



DOMESTIC TERROR

BY KIER-LA JANISSE



PARANOIA CREEPS. IT INFECTS AND TAINTS, and is ever present in our current culture of fear and surveillance. It's also the driving force behind *Salvage*, a film that takes a British cult-de-sac and morphs it into a battleground, where soldiers try to contain, control and suppress a deadly secret.

"What I loved about the basic premise for *Salvage* was that it played out in an ordinary, domestic setting," says screenwriter Colin O'Donnell. "Familiarity is a strong device within horror, and an area I am particularly drawn to when creating stories. The thin line between the ordinary and the extraordinary, and that the facade of our lives can easily be stripped away in a moment, exposing terrifying inner and outer forces. That's a reality that we all relate to."

The film, directed by Lawrence Gough and out on DVD in North America on July 6, first hit festival screens in June of 2009, and remains one of the most distinctive recent examples of the politics of fear at work in genre cinema. *Salvage* opens with teenaged Jodie (Linsey Cocker) reluctantly arriving to spend Christmas with her estranged mother, Beth. After an immediate blowout, Jodie finds solace with the more conventional neighbours only moments before the domestic drama is dwarfed by an unexpected military raid. The heavily-armed soldiers are trying to control someone or something that's gotten loose. But the film offers more questions than answers. Who are they hunting? Why that suburb? What is the strange shipping container that washed up on a nearby beach? As the characters attempt to answer these questions, the narrative explores the deep state of mistrust that we live in every day.

Ordering the residents to stay indoors, the military's delectable goal is to secure the area in the wake of a nearby massacre that—feeding on the civilians' inherent xenophobia—they expertly attribute to terrorists. Though light on gore, tension, paranoia, miscommunication and prejudice are all major elements in the 76-minute film, just as they are in British culture in general. From the dramatic explosion of surveillance cameras throughout the UK since the late '70s, to DNA tracking and increased monitoring of personal emails, the government has routinely used the threat of terrorism as a means of justifying the systematic curtailing of civil liberties. Not unexpectedly, the military remains an

ignorant and antagonistic force in *Salvage*. And while the existence of a "monster" provides a palpable adversary, it is meant to distract from the sudden state of martial law and the government's role in propagating fear.

"The 7/7 bombings in London [in 2005] were very recent at the time we were developing the film," O'Donnell explains. "Arrests were being made all over the country and the scary thing people felt—I think—was that the perpetrators weren't deranged idiots with no path in life, but actually doctors and science graduates who had a firm belief in something and were willing to give themselves up for that belief. ... It's fair to say that 9/11 and 7/7 changed the face of terrorism forever and left an indelible mark on Western society—that's what we wanted to explore."

Blame is equally pervasive in the film's interpersonal relationships. The military's search for a tangible enemy is mirrored in Jodie's demonization of her mother, an independent woman whose character is harshly tested throughout the film. In fact, one of the most compelling things about *Salvage* is how it switches protagonists. The initial set-up positions Jodie as our guide through the story, but as the characters are separated, the film is slyly handed from her to Beth, who has already been characterized as irresponsible and disloyal. But with her stranded daughter providing the fuel for her frantic actions, Beth reveals herself to be rather resourceful and determined. Actress Nave Andrews, who had no horror background prior to *Salvage*, proved equally up to the challenge, and her achievements did not go unnoticed. McIntosh won the Best Actress award in the horror category at Austin's Fantastic Fest in 2009 for her powerful performance.

Salvage is also host to some great set pieces, in particular a sequence in which Beth finds the neighbours' kitchen in shambles: the would-be holiday spread smeared all over the counters and walls, spilling out of the ovens, with bits of hair and skin intermingled with the food.

"The normalcy of the cul-de-sac, its inhabitants and Christmas dinner was set up and then completely obliterated," says Gough. "The bunko was real, and after a few days it began to smell and develop mould. After a week the entire kitchen became a health hazard, but this gave the actors a great sense of reality to work within. I am particularly proud of this subversion of normalcy, that even our homes and gardens can become a war zone." ■



REISSUES



LONG LIVE THE GRUE FLESH

CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD
(SPECIAL EDITION) (1980) DVD/Blu-ray

Starring Christopher George, Catriona MacColl
and Giovanni Lombardo Radice
Directed by Lucio Fulci
Written by Lucio Fulci and Bernardino Sacchetti
Blue Underground

Putrid praise to Blue Underground for preserving the mouldering, maggoty charms of

Lucio Fulci's *City of the Living Dead* in this new Special Edition DVD and Blu-ray. If you're reading this magazine, chances are you don't require a recap, but just in case, here goes: the suicide of a priest (Fabrizio Jovine) opens the portals of hell in the sleepy New England town of Dunwich, unleashing hordes of the undead upon its citizens. A psychic (Catriona MacColl), who narrowly avoids being buried alive in the film's most nerve-rattling scene, and a cigar-chewing reporter (Christopher George) lead the charge to close the gates before All Saints Day, when the dead will take over the world.



After *The Beyond*, *City* is the doomiest of Fulci's pictures from the gore-soaked third quarter of his career, and it's steeped as much in Sergio Salvati's neon-streaked photography and the nervous synthesizers of composer Fabio Frizzi as it is in blood. Though to be honest, the film's chief *raison d'être* is Gino De Rossi's gag-inducing effects, which run the gamut from drills through skulls and brains ripped from noggers, to the show-stopping moment in which Daniela Doria spews up her entire intestinal tract. A rite of passage for '80s-era grindhouse habitués, *City* has lost none of its power to repulse or win fans for its maestro, Signor Fulci.

BU's DVD looks drop-dead gorgeous; taken from the original, uncut negative, it's supplemented with a new, 32-minute making-of featurette, which includes interviews with MacColl, Salvati, De Rossi, co-star Michele Soavi and numerous other production team members. Most of its running time is devoted to stories about the challenges of the shoot, which range from the best way to blow maggots into the actors' faces to Fulci's own legendary irascible temper. English-language and Italian trailers, as well as a bat-

tery of radio spots for *Gates of Hell* (its US title), round out the disc; in addition, the Blu-ray offers longer chats with MacColl, perennial Euro-cult whipping boy Giovanni Lombardo Radice and even more thorough reminiscences with the crew. Overall, it's a lotta bang for your rotten buck.

PAUL GAITA

CRUISIN' FOR A BRUISIN'

DEATH RACE 2000 (1975) DVD/Blu-ray

Starring David Carradine, Sylvester Stallone
and Mary Woronov
Directed by Paul Bartel
Written by Robert Thom and Charles B. Griffith
Shout! Factory

Shout! Factory's new Roger Corman Classics line has *Death Race 2000* lookin' like one mean machine in this DVD and Blu-ray release celebrating the cult film's splashy combination of sexual innuendo, hot rodden' hotties, fiery explosions and campy gore.

In the year 2000, a dystopian society called the United Provinces of America plays host to a no-holds-barred transcontinental road race that has taken the country by storm. Frankenstein (David Carradine), Machine Gun Joe (Sylvester Stallone) and Calamity Jane (Mary Woronov) are among the colourful celebrity drivers behind the wheels of the killin' machines as they race across the country in "the greatest sporting event since the days of Spartacus." The road to glory runs red and body parts fly as the drivers rack up points for maiming innocent bystanders—at least until the race is threatened by a mounting rebel resistance intent on sabotaging the event in an effort to disgrace the nation's esteemed leader, Mr. President.

Adapted from a serious, futuristic short story called "The Races" by B. Meador, *DR2K* earned its cult legacy largely on the efforts of legendary no-budget producer Corman and actor/director Paul Bartel's (*Fabing Abow*) decision to present the story's unprecedented violence in a cartoonish, sardonic light. The pair's rumination on the public's growing fascination with violence, idol worship and the subsequent media sensationalism was largely dismissed by critics upon its release, but the film still earned solid box-office receipts on the strength of its larger-than-life characters, cool cars and Corman's commitment to making a "bits 'n' ass picture." Sylvester Stallone becoming a bona fide star a year later with *Rocky* certainly didn't hurt either.

Though there have been numerous DVD incarnations over the years, the Blu-ray boasts a





Death Race 2000: David Carradine drives his avatar as Frankenstein.

new, anamorphic widescreen, high-def transfer and rounds up pre-existing special features from past releases, such as the audio commentary with Corman and Woronov and making-of featurette *Playing the Game* (a making-of featurette). There are also new short docs on the film's score, costume design and car construction, as well as a short 2008 interview with David Carradine, a Leonard Maltin interview with Roger Corman and a twelve-page booklet that's guaranteed to get your motor running.

TREVOR TUMINSKI

DEUTSCHPLOTTATION DUO

EURO FANTASTICO: THE BLACK COBRA (1963)

Starring Adrian Hoven, Wolfgang Preis and Paul Dalrymple
Directed by Rudolf Zehetgruber
Written by Rensan Schifesser and Rudolf Zehetgruber

NO SURVIVORS PLEASE (1964)

Starring Maria Perschy, Robert Conningham and Uwe Friedrichsen
Directed by Hans Albin and Peter Bernies
Written by Peter Bernies
VCI Entertainment

Readers who remember the barrage of dubbed European imports that populated late-show time slots of decades past should get a kick out of this twofold of German genre flicks from the early 1960s. *The Black Cobra* is a by-the-books crime pic with future *Mark of the Devil*/Succubus producer Adrian Hoven as a trucker caught up in drug trafficking. There are not a lot of chills, and the pace occasionally slows for combat comedy and romance, but the violence is casually nasty in a way that's reminiscent of some of the better *Krimi* (German

crime films). Psychotronic transporters will also appreciate the cast, which is populated by such Deutschploitation vets as Klaus Kinski, Wolfgang Preis (*The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*), Ady Berber (*Dead Eyes of London*) and Herbert Fux (*Mark of the Devil*). Furthermore, the three-part finale, which offers up a wrestling match in a flour factory, a car chase in a junkyard and the head trafficker crushed to death in a compactor, is arguably how all movies should end.

Similarly, the sci-fi thriller *No Survivors Please* begs to be seen during the midnight hour — its delicious (and derivative) story of icy-hearted, sherry-loving aliens who plan Earth's destruction by taking over the bodies of top American and Russian officials is driven by yards of stock footage and moments of jaw-dropping, left-field insanity. For example, Gustavo Rojo, as the extraterrestrials' chief killer, tosses a lady's shoe off the Eiffel Tower, which is immediately followed by the woman herself.



The fact that the aliens must maintain their human guises was likely a budgetary requirement and not an aesthetic choice, but it also suggests the *No Wave* vibe of 1962's crazed, zero-budget cult film *The Creation of the Humanoids*, which is never a bad thing. Mostly, however, it's a typical Euro-crazy quilt of genres that stitches together its spaceman and body snatcher tropes with elements of Cold War spy

intrigue and paranoia, as well as exotic locales and even a sappy romance — all of which work[®] to wrap the vintage horror and exploitation fan in a comforting, black-and-white blanket of nostalgia.

PAUL GAITA

ROGERED RABBITS

EVIL TOONS (1992)

Starring David Carradine, Dick Miller and Monique Gabrielle
Written and directed by Fred Glen Ray
Reinmedia

If you're a horror movie buff with a taste for trash, *Evil Toons* is for you — a crazed 80-minute combo of live-action and animation that revels in boobies, blood, bad acting and cheese. Fortunately, its self-aware, lowbrow sense of humor can be infectious. After all, how can you hate a movie that opens with a quote from the director stating, "The story you are about to see is true. Nothing has been changed. These are the actual people who lived this great adventure and this is exactly the way it really happened. I truly believe this," yet concerns a cartoon monster (designed by Chas. Balun) raping and murdering attractive young ladies?

The story kicks off in live-action mode with a group of busty women being assigned to clean out a creepy old mansion. Upon discovering an even creepier book (which bears more than a passing resemblance to the one from *The Evil Dead*), they read a passage aloud that raises an evil cartoon spirit from the grave. Possessing one of the girls, the animated apparition attempts to kill everyone in sight — until David Carradine comes along to save the day. Despite a box flaunting both the monster and Carradine — not to mention a "20th Anniversary Edition" label that comes two years too early — budgetary constraints severely limit their screen time. As such, most of *Evil Toons* is dedicated to sexy, not-so-talented actresses roaming around an empty house waiting for the monster's arrival.

Prolific cult writer/director Fred Glen Ray (*Ghost in a Teeny Bikini*, *Tomb of the Werewolf*) clearly doesn't take the film seriously and doesn't ask his audience to either. Characters joke about their clichéd situations, the camera lingers on cheap effects just long enough for them to be funny and the recognizable actors constantly wink at the camera as if to say, "What the hell am I doing in this movie?"

Though not particularly memorable, *Evil Toons* epitomizes the term "guilty pleasure."

PHIL BROWN





RELEASED BY PRODUCER ROGER CORMAN'S NEW WORLD PICTURES at the height of the post-*Star Wars*

space opera resurgence, *Galaxy of Terror* (1981) and *Forbidden World* (1982) are essentially Ridley Scott's *Alien* as viewed through a madcap prism of sex and violence. And while *Alien* is now seen as a bold step forward for genre filmmaking, these splatter-happy thrillers bask in a cheap 1950s monster movie vibe, eager to prove that in space, no one can hear your intestines being ripped out.

The more recognized entry, *Galaxy of Terror*, sleazes up the well-loved sci-fi horror blockbuster with abundant helpings of vomit, boobs, slime, lasers, guts and — of course — extraterrestrial sex. A notable exploitation cast, including Sid Hag, Robert Englund, Zalman King and *Happy Days*' Emm Moran (a.k.a. Joanie), appear as members of a spaceship crew sent to a desolate planet on a futile search for crash survivors.

Upon arrival, the crew members start dying in strange and frequently bloody ways. The problem is soon traced to an alien pyramid that is somehow able to physically manifest their deepest and darkest fears. One character is attacked by his own severed arm (juggles and all), another is crushed by sentient wires, and one unlucky lady (Saffie O'Connell) is raped to death by a giant alien worm in what has to be one of the most outré scenes of the 1980s.

The atmospherics and production design (by future New World breakout and *Aliens* director James Cameron) may be derived from *Alien*, but the film's story and assorted baddies hearken back even further, drawing from *Forbidden Planet* and its "monsters from the id." Though the plot is sometimes incoherent, the ideas behind *Galaxy of Terror* are fairly sound and the frenzied premise allows director Bruce D. Clark to indulge in thrilling and surreal imagery as the crew tries to survive.

Often viewed as an inferior follow-up, director Allen Holtzman's *Forbidden World* remains a gooey bit of fun that sticks a bit closer to Sir Ridley's original template. Presented here in a never-before-seen unrated director's cut, the film is set at an intergalactic outpost where an experimental regenerative life form goes on a killing spree, liquefying genetic scien-

tists with its deadly saliva. Trigger-happy troubleshooter Mike Colby (Jesse Vint) is called in to laser blast the holy hell out of the Giger-esque creature, but is distracted by the outpost's shapely female inhabitants (played by Dawn Dunlop and June Chadwick). After the guts unwisely attempt to reason with the organism, Colby is left to find a way to stop the constantly mutilating creature before he too is melted into a pool of interplanetary pus.

What *Forbidden World* lacks in originality and budget (are those egg cartons on the walls?), it more than makes up for in go-for-the-throat exploitation excess. Aside from the wholly gratuitous shower sequences, the film is best when directly spang its inspiration, as Colby cautiously hunts down the slimy creature in eerie, narrow corridors and characters are dispatched in increasingly queasy ways. The acting is not quite up to par, but it sets the stage for character actor Fox Harris (best known as *Repo Man*'s mad inventor J. Frank Parnell) to steal the show as a chain-smoking scientist that uncovers the monster's fatal weakness.

Like its predecessor, *Forbidden World* peels back one more layer on *Alien* and almost re-envision the action as a squishy update of Howard Hawks' *The Thing* from *Another World*, one of Scott's obvious influences. It's a lot of lurid fun, but be warned: Holtzman's strobe-effect editing style is more annoying than arty, and the film lazily recycles shots from both *Galaxy* and New World's *Star Wars* copy, *Battle Beyond the Stars*.

Galaxy of Terror and *Forbidden World* are among the first genre releases in Shout! Factory's welcome new imprint "Roger Corman's Cult Classics," and are available on both DVD and Blu-ray with plentiful extras, including commentaries, new interviews with cast and crew, trailers, posters and stills. The *Galaxy of Terror* discs are particularly jam-packed, with a number of featurettes exploring the origins of the film, its art direction and set creation, makeup and practical effects, as well as the shoot itself — virtually everything a fan needs to delve deeper. Good thing too, because these B-classics are the perfect first steps for those who seek to explore the far, gooey reaches of Corman's New World Pictures output. 🍷





A LOT O' CLANG FOR YOUR BUCK

THE MONSTER AND THE APE (1945)

Starring Robert Lowery, George Macready and Ralph Morgan
 Directed by Howard Bretherton
 Written by Royal K. Cole and Sherman L. Lowe
 Cheesy Flicks

Action, thrills, chills and cliffhangers, cliffhangers, cliffhangers! This simple moviemaking formula kept kids coming back to their local theatres week after week to catch the lightning-paced fun of serials, such as Columbia Pictures' *The Monster and the Ape*. Swinging onto commercial DVD for the first time, courtesy of Cheesy Flicks, *The Monster and the Ape* is a fifteen-chapter adventure that mixes the visceral thrills of robots and gorillas with international intrigue – all meted out in 30-minute segments that end with its square-jawed heroes facing seemingly inescapable mortal danger.

Although serials were incredibly popular added theatrical attractions throughout the 1930s and '40s, only a handful can truly be considered "horror" by any stretch of the genre's definition. Parents of the proteen viewers that ate up these uniquely formatted films probably preferred them watching cowboys, space explorers and costumed superheroes over authentically creepy monster mayhem. But after

Bela Lugosi was drafted to appear in serials *The Whispering Shadow* (1933) and *The Phantom Creeps* (1939), the influence of horror films began to grow in the format. Later efforts *The Crimson Ghost* (1946), the whodunit *Who's Guilty?* (1945) and *The Black Widow* (1947) unashamedly borrowed old dark house motifs, as broad caricatures of good and evil battled it out on shadowy pasteboard sets.

Count *The Monster and the Ape* in there too, a goofy gorilla serial that follows in the tradition of other rampaging ape pics, including *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1932), *The Ape* (1940) and *The Monster Maker* (1944). Each of the film's fifteen chapters details a prolonged power struggle to control the Metalogen Man (the titular "monster"), a clunky but exceptionally strong robot invented by Professor Arnold (Ralph Morgan). Mad scientist Ernst (George Macready) wants to steal this new technology to sell to evil foreigners, so he sends out his trained ape Thor

(a scene-stealing Ray "Crash" Corrigan) to kill off Arnold's associates. Arnold then enlists the help of his daughter Babs (Carole Mathews) and her love interest Ken Morgan (Robert Lowery) to get him back.

Much of the serial's staggering eight-hour runtime is devoted to Arnold and Ernst's repeated attempts to steal the robot from each other's grasp through sneaky schemes that always lead to rowdy fist fights – around three per chapter (though, disappointingly, never between the robot and the ape). Compounding the issue, the robot is made of the uncommon element "metalogen," sending both heroes and villains on a wild chase to track down this rare material so they can begin manufacturing their own robot armies.

As *The Monster and the Ape* was squarely aimed at kids, its themes aren't exactly understated. Rather than explore the simmering societal fears of WWII-era America, the script just drops in familiar B-movie clichés, including primal beasts, science-gone-mad technological advances and shady Nazi co-conspirators, without further comment. But it doesn't matter – their use is mostly symbolic, meant to remind viewers of the similar scary threats in better movies, dime novels and pulp magazines that they have already enjoyed. Instead, it's the chapter-ending cliffhangers that are the serial's sole source of suspense and peril, as Ernst's henchmen employ blast furnaces, electrified plates, rock slides and more to stop Professor Arnold, Babs and Ken from recovering the Metalogen Man and the precious supply of metalogen. Too bad *The Monster and the Ape* often

cheats to keep its heroes alive – characters bound to meet certain death one week are seen escaping with seconds to spare in craftily reshot sequences the next.

But logic and tightly scripted plotting aren't really the point of *The Monster and the Ape*, a work that is more than content to follow the simplistic conventions of the serial format. With a fun premise and solid performances by veteran character actors, it remains an interesting monster-crossed

example of a long-gone filmmaking trend, which will satisfy indiscriminating viewers prepared for its silly, cartoonish antics – and those hair-raising cliffhangers, of course!



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DRIVE-INS. DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

AEROBICIDE!

by John W. Bowen

I can't stress it enough: I really, really fucking hate the 1980s. We're talking about the most culturally barren decade of the 20th century. Think about it — can you name a worse one? Huey Lewis, Bon Jovi, Kajagoogoo. *Miami Vice*, *The Cosby Show*, *Growing Pains*, *Cap Rock*, Neon, pastels, spandex, hideous hairstyles, fuckin' legwarmers everywhere, mrritch. And to make matters worse, instead of rebelling against the conformist bullshit peddled by minions of the Mulroney/Reagan/Thatcher axis of evil, most of the younger generation was content to just roll over, spread 'em and take it up the fuckus like a bunch of good sports. Today, the '80s remain such an embarrassment to all concerned that they've even been largely bypassed by that curious but formally reliable pop-culture hiccup, the twenty-year nostalgia wave: it's the decade they can't revive, a ten-year faded orgasm that precious few want to acknowledge.

The one art form that survived this cultural migraine relatively unscathed, oddly enough, was film. Even if the head-up-the-ass Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences didn't get behind *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, *Blade Runner*, *Blue Velvet*, *RoboCop*, *Heathers* and the darkest efforts of the Coen brothers, audiences and a significant number of critics did. Sure, there was plenty of drack to go around — when isn't there? — but from big-budget multiplex fodder to the underground, subversion, satire, antiheroes and anarchy were in ample cinematic supply in the '80s if you knew where to look, and naturally horror was well represented. *The Evil Dead*, *Maniac*, *Return of the Living Dead*, *The Hitcher* and *Halloween* galvanized audiences while outraging knee-jerk types at both ends of the political spectrum. And I'll readily admit that while my distaste for Dario Argento remains profound and my appreciation of Lucio Fulci seldom rises above lukewarm, I salute them both enthusiastically for fearlessly flying their respective middle fingers in the face of widespread cul-



tural conservatism. (Admittedly, with the continued success of Stephen King and the rise of Clive Barker, Dean Koontz, James Herbert, Robert R. McCammon and many more, horror fiction was experiencing an unprecedented boom during this period as well.)

So which horror film epitomizes the '80s for our esteemed collar dweller? Despite my fondness for the aforementioned titles, I'm gonna have to go with a considerably lesser-known little amuse-bouche called *Death Spa* (1988). If that title provokes only a resounding "Huh?" — don't sweat it, I myself didn't discover it until approximately ten years after its release, and only then because the trailer was featured on a VHS edition of some other film I can't remember at present.

When a series of grisly accidents for are they... begins plaguing staff and members at the upscale, state-of-the-art Star Body Health Spa, owner Michael Evans becomes suspicious that his dead (and formerly witchcraft-dabbling) wife is behind the carnage, possibly in cahoots with her creepy brother, who runs the super-computer told ya it was the '80s! that controls everything in the place. What can go wrong at a spa? Comparatively little, unless you count steam room scaldings, weight-machine evictions, flying shower room tile lacerations, mirrors that cause people to explode, the inevitable burning bed scorching and a side serving of post-traumatic stress disorder caused by the sight of

Ken Forre in a sky-blue blazer with rainbow lapels for all the rampant cheese, the gore effects are both competent and plentiful, and yes, there's gratuitous nudity; locker room + sauna + hot tub + shower = more full-frontal fleshy festivities than you can shake a dick at.

While there are notable exceptions, the '80s can be roughly bisected into the slasher years (post-*Friday* the 13th, 1980-84) and the rubber-reality years (post-*Nightmare on Elm Street*, 1984-89). Trouble was, with most horror films being low-budget, slasher films were relatively easy to pull off competently, whereas rubber reality called for elaborate and often large-scale special effects. Hence, the cheaper ones tend to be either memorable for their lo-fi ingenuity (*Wes Craven's* original *Elm Street*, *Hello Mary Lou*, *From Night II*, *The Gate*, *From Beyond*) or embarrassingly over-ambitious botch-ups (most of the others).

Death Spa provides both in more or less equal measure, sometimes during the same scene, one sequence in the final act involving a possessed blender and reanimated frozen fish tanks among the most hysterical el cheapo kill sequences of the era. I have to admit I still haven't seen *Death Spa's* better-known counterpart *Killer Workout* (1986), but this baby nails the zeitgeist — make that shitegeist — of the 1980s effortlessly, with its unapologetic mash-up of bad fashion, worse music and audacious carnage. Now pull up your leg warmers and get the hell out of my basement. ☹



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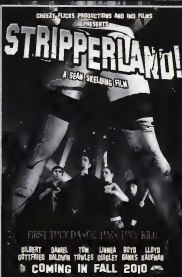
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BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

by PEDRO CABEZUELO

Troma Films has been effortlessly fusing horror and comedy since 1984's flagship movie *The Toxic Avenger*. In 2006, the company released *Poultrygeist: Night of the Chicken Dead*, a zombie-chicken horror parody that managed to satirize *Polltergeist*, *Night of the Living Dead*, the fast food industry, political correctness and all kinds of other stuff in one fell swoop. It found an audience with both horror and comedy fans, and now a comic sequel, *Poultrygeist: Return of the Chicken Dead*, is in the works for release this fall.

The deadly cluckers' return was orchestrated by writers Shane Swenson and Brian Myers, the latter of whom is also responsible for the art chores. Myers worked as an animator for Troma Productions before branching out to comics, primarily for Creator's Edge Press. His talents as a cartoonist – and his off-the-wall sense of humour – indirectly led to the birth of the new comic.

"The project originated by just hanging out with [Troma president and *Poultrygeist* director] Lloyd Kaufman," explains Myers. "We were working a horror convention, Lloyd, Shane and myself. It was pretty slow, so I got bored and started drawing pictures of dead celebrities. I did a Kurt Cobain, David Carradine – who had just died – and even a creepy Michael Jackson. Lloyd loved them and we just started talking about how we would work them into a *Poultrygeist* comic book. Shane and I came up with the basic outline of what we wanted to do, ran it by Lloyd, Lloyd loved it and we were off!"

Fans of the film should be pleased. Like the best sequels, the comic miniseries is a direct follow-up to the movie yet branches off in a different direction. It begins after Hollywood has bought up the rights to make a movie out of the events of *Poultrygeist* – a film with plenty of Oscar buzz, no less! This time the hero of the story is Darbie (brother of *Poultrygeist*'s main character Arby),

who gets a job working on the film as a production assistant.

"Of course things start going horribly wrong and he gets kind of swept up in all of it," says Myers. "He has the same naive nature that Arby had – I'd say even a bit more so – so when things start going awry he kind of buys into a lot of the corporate spin, until things get so out of control he has to accept it and become the hero."

The original film pulled no punches when it came to satirizing consumer consumption. For the comic, the sights are now focused on Hollywood, and many of the laughs come at the expense of celebrities and the corporate culture that controls them.

"We found that to really tie in with Lloyd's film we needed to make sure we had some kind of commentary aspect to it, so while it can be daunting to walk that balance of commentary and entertainment value, it's turning out quite well," says Myers.

In true Troma fashion, comedy collides head on with horror, in an outrageously disgusting mess. Myers' artwork emphasizes the more humorous aspects of the storyline, although he's certainly not afraid to get nasty. A scene where one of the characters stumbles upon David Carradine's corpse hanging from the rafters with a massive erection is both hilarious and deeply disturbing. And of course, as befits a zombie comic, there are plenty of people torn to shreds.

"Everything escalates as the miniseries progresses, so as the books advance, the deaths get more over-the-top and grisly," assures Myers. "Horror and comedy aren't that different from each other really, they are both based on timing and, of course, know-



Poultrygeist: Return of the Chicken Dead: Zombie chickens peck at dead celebrities, political correctness and the fast food industry

ing your audience. I think there's definitely a market for it, look at *Shaun of the Dead*, there are a ton of horror comedies out there that work amazingly well. But you can't just slap them together for the sake of it. I balance the two by looking at timing. Gore can't just come out of nowhere unless it fits the story. Same thing with humour; you can't have a gory scene and just have a guy fart, it doesn't make sense. Everything has to make sense in the context of the story. You have to be able to pace things right and respect both genres."

For updates on *Poultrygeist: Return of the Chicken Dead* visit brianmyersartist.com or the comic's Facebook page.



My praise for *Vertigo* is constant because the bulk of the imprint's output – including *Sweet Tooth*, a new on-going series by Jeff Lemire – is simply excellent. The first five issues are collected in this edition and, as usual, benefit from being read in one sitting. The story takes place in an apocalyptic future where most of humanity has been wiped out by a mysterious plague. Children born after the plague have been gifted with immunity, but they're also part animal. Gus, a nine-year-old boy with antlers, finds himself alone after his father succumbs to the virus, until a drifter promises to protect him and lead him to the safety of the "Preserve." *Sweet Tooth* is a disturbing, futuristic fable that also manages to be touching, whimsical, foreboding and always unsettling.

This comic adaptation of the popular horror mash-up novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* may be one of the best written graphic novels ever produced. Unfortunately, I'll never know because I stopped reading a quarter of the way through due to the horrendous, eye-straining art layout. The decision to produce the book in black and white is understandable considering the period subject matter, though colour surely would have greatly improved the story's presentation. Faint pencil lines and page after page of nondescript backgrounds and characters make the book look half-finished, like a sketchbook instead of an actual graphic novel. I could live with this "style" if I thought it served the story but not only does it completely negate the zombie sequences, it also makes the characters virtually indistinguishable from one another. I defy anyone to clearly identify each of the Bennett sisters. This is a genuine waste of time, talent and money.

Anyone who's read the original *Dracula* knows that the good ship Oemeler meets a ghastly fate while transporting its "cargo"



evil presence is onboard. Writer Gary Gerani manages to create suspense while fleshing out the dramatics of the period, but considering the well-known source material, he'll need to throw in a few twists as the story develops to keep readers on their toes. If nothing else, Stuart Sayger's wonderfully atmospheric art is a visual feast.



Readers of horror and fantasy are familiar with stories where normal people are torn from their everyday lives and thrust into a strange and hostile environment. *The Claw & Fang* follows that familiar pattern, except the story's hero, Justin, happens to be a huge MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game) player. I'm sure this will come in

handy when he has to fight the demon that has just been summoned to take over the world. The traditional elements of comic storytelling are all here and yet something is missing. Perhaps it's the lack of originality or the absence of compelling characters but for the moment *The Claw & Fang* is devoid of the necessary scratch and bite.

Issue #44 of *Batman Confidential* starts a new storyline, appropriately titled "Batman vs. the Undead." While in New Orleans tracking an escaped Arkham Asylum inmate, Batman no sooner crosses paths with some-time ally Omelet the vampire, then both are attacked by a swarm of zombies. The exact nature and reason of the attack will have to wait for a future issue, since this installment is mostly concerned with the set-up, which it presents quite well. The characters are introduced in a leisurely manner, making sure everyone is in place for the inevitable carnage. As usual, Tom Mandrake's stunning art is worth the cover price. ♥



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Christopher Lee
and Peter Cushing
and Horror Cinema:

A Filmography of Their
22 Collaborations

Mark A. Miller
McFarland

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CHRISTOPHER LEE AND PETER CUSHING AND HORROR CINEMA: A FILMOGRAPHY OF THEIR 22 COLLABORATIONS

Mark A. Miller
McFarland

When you mention Christopher Lee, it's difficult not to think of Peter Cushing as well – and vice-versa. That's because the two icons (and real-life best friends) enjoyed one of the longest running and most successful partnerships in horror cinema – eclipsing even that of Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi, from whom Lee and Cushing had inherited the mantle of horror luminaries. Though both actors had highly distinguished film careers of their own, some of their most revered projects were those in which they appeared together.

In the recently reissued *Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing and Horror Cinema* – first published in 1994 and long out-of-print – author Mark A. Miller provides an in-depth examination of the stars' 22 collaborative efforts. The book begins with brief biographies of both actors, which detail their early stage and film experiences, before moving on to their first two shared projects. *Hamlet* (1948) and *Moulin Rouge* (1952). Strangely, the actors didn't appear together in either film; it wasn't until they made 1957's *The Curse of Frankenstein* for Hammer Studios that they'd come face to face. A box-office smash, it led to the pair's re-teaming in *Horror of Dracula* the following year, kicking off nearly two decades of other Hammer classics, such as *The Mummy* (1959), *The Gorgon* (1964) and *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* (1974).

But, as Miller's book points out, the actors also made a considerable number of films together away from Hammer, working on several well-re-

garded anthologies for Amicus Productions, including *Dr. Terror's House of Horrors* (1965) and *The House That Dripped Blood* (1970), as well as foreign-lensed projects such as *Horror Express* (1972) and their final film together, 1983's *House of the Long Shadows*.

Providing a synopsis, production info and critique for each production, Miller isn't afraid to point out a film's deficiencies (though rarely does he lay blame at Cushing or Lee's feet). Thoroughly researched, this 447-page tome additionally benefits from interviews with both actors and other genre luminaries, such as Vincent Price and Hazel Court, who worked alongside them and provide many insightful and entertaining anecdotes. The inclusion of candid photos (including Lee being made up as Frankenstein's creature) and no less than three forewords (by Lee, Cushing and author Robert Bloch – the latter two contributed their write-ups shortly before their deaths) help make this a highly recommended offering for followers of classic fright flicks.

JAMES BURRELL

THE BITTEN WORD

Ian Whates, ed.
Newcom Press

If you need any further proof that vampires are truly versatile creatures, *The Bitten Word* will undoubtedly take care of that – the bloodsuckers appear here in all their varied forms, from ruthless killers to misunderstood monsters, and most points in between. Unfortunately, that's not enough to elevate this seventeen-story collection above the usual glut of themed anthologies.

According to the book's intro, editor Ian Whates approached this project with a desire to produce

"something fresh and original within the well-trod genre," and he actually does an admirable job at that – amusingly enough, by selecting stories which primarily take us back into real world history or utilize the characters and settings from classic literature. Sam Stone's "Fool's Gold" gives the infamous Jack the Ripper murders a supernatural explanation, "Lord of the Lyceum" depicts a blood-drinker (or two) into the theatre that Bram Stoker managed in order to pit the *Dracula* author against an actual vampire, while Jon Courtenay Grimwood gives us a monster-soaked narrative set on the Wuthering Heights estate, which posits a much more macabre future for Emily Brontë's Heathcliff and Catherine.

Tandi Lee, Storm Constantine, Chaz Benchley and Frode Warrington all go the historical route for their stories as well, while Nancy Kilpatrick breaks form to bring us the book's only futuristic tale, about a world where vamps have joined society and have, appropriately enough, taken over the funeral business. As with most collections, there are also a couple tales here, which, for all their originality, feel out of place. This is particularly true for John Kaine's needlessly cryptic "English Spoken" and Kan Sperring's "Coldrush," which offers a vampire-style story set within the insect kingdom, but ultimately comes up short and feels overly obtuse when considered against the rest of the book's content.

Ultimately, *The Bitten Word* is an enjoyable read, but few – if any – of these tales will haunt you deep into the night. And that's the difference between an average anthology and a stellar one. Still, for serious vampire fans who are thirsting for something different from the *Twilight* and *True Blood*-style bloodsucker stories that have overrun pop culture of late, there's enough innovation here to consider taking a bite.

MONICA S. KUEBLER

THE GRIM READER

FOUR NAILS IN THE COFFIN

Mark Wheaton
Southbound Films

Four Nails in the Coffin is a self-published effort by graphic novelist and horror screenwriter Mark Wheaton (*The Messengers*) that collects a quartet of novellas into a single release. While the book's two monster tales and the "deal with the devil" story are suitably entertaining, they are ultimately overshadowed by "Sunday Billy Sunday," a genuinely twisted and engrossing narrative about a priest's "Divine" transformation from trusted minister to mass murderer, which may just leave you shaken for days.

JESSA SOBCHUK



REAL ZOMBIES, THE LIVING DEAD, AND CREATURES OF THE APOCALYPSE

Brad Steiger
Visible Ink

Brad Steiger's latest book purports to uncover the empirical truth about the undead dead, but it's actually a collection of myths and folk legends covering everything from cursed Egyptian mummies to contemporary Wiccans, with a generous helping of Voodoo stories on the side. It's reasonably interesting, but the number of obvious factual errors, such as the propagation of long-debunked theories, is frustrating, and exposes Steiger's idiosyncratic take on "reality."

JUSTINE WARWICK



"REMEMBER YOU'RE A ONE-BALL"

Quentin S. Crisp
Chimú Press

Morbid storyteller Quentin S. Crisp pushes testicular trauma to its most unsettling in his latest novel, which sees social outsider Ramsey Blake returning to his old primary school to teach. Once there, he discovers that bullying is not just a phase, but a conspiratorial tradition of systematic abuse — the tortuous title says it all. There is no nostalgia in Crisp's grim meditation on childhood, just paranoia, simmering disgust and misanthropic horror.

BRIAN J. SHOWERS



The Idiot's Guide to Zombies: Ben (Duane Jones) vs. the shufflers in *Night of the Living Dead*.

THE COMPLETE IDIOT'S GUIDE TO ZOMBIES

Nathan Robert Brown
Alpha

Zombies may not be "the latest monster craze" anymore, as the cover of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Zombies* attests, but author Nathan Robert Brown thinks even complete idiots need to know all about them. It's a worthy goal, and the result likely makes for more interesting reading than *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Value Investing* or any of the other 450-plus "Idiot's" guides currently available. Too bad Brown's scholarship (he's a doctoral student of mythological studies at the University of Texas in Arlington) is occasionally questionable and his conclusions sometimes far-fetched.

The guide is comprehensive, covering zombies in myth, history, literature, comics, film and online, as well as their impact on real life (i.e., zombie survivalist groups). Each section covers key genre works, and includes useful sidebars (e.g., "Moooooaaan...," for definitions, "Brains!" for useful facts). And, as with all good works of non-fiction, there are helpful appendices.

Too bad this *Idiot's Guide* seems to have been edited and fact-checked by idiots, zombies or some combination thereof. There are glaring errors (Brown claims 1943's *I Walked With A Zombie* has yet to come to DVD when it came out in 2008, he says Bill Murray's *Zombieland* character died from a head shot, when, in fact, it was the stomach). Other mistakes are the result of sloppiness, such as mentioning the Nazi zombie film *Dead Snow* in the introduction to "The Modern Zombie Cinema Canon," then not actually writing about it.

No doubt Brown's heart (and other edibles) is in the right place. He dedicates the book to "the legend himself," George A. Romero, and devotes an entire chapter to his zombie oeuvre, up to and including his latest, *Survival of the Dead* (*RAM: I D*). He also spends substantial time on zombie history, both in real life (relying heavily on Canadian ethnobotanist Wade Davis' book *The Serpent and the Rainbow*) and fiction (including early instances of the living dead in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and H.P. Lovecraft's *Herbert West: Reanimator*).

Many will question Brown's taste (*The Return of the Living Dead* and Lucio Fulci's *Zombiere* examples of "When Zombie Movies Go Rotten") and conclusions ("a fit, combat-trained individual could probably dispatch a party of four to six zombies fairly easily." Really?) But, fortunately, his *Idiot's Guide* is only partly brain-dead.

SEAN PLUMMER

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MODERN WRITERS CROSS INTO THE TWILIGHT ZONE
FOR A NEW ANTHOLOGY EDITED BY CAROL SERLING.

SHADOWS AND SUBSTANCE

BY PAUL CORUPE

The *Twilight Zone* wasn't the first program to specialize in twist-heavy science fiction and horror stories, but it may just have perfected the style. Though series creator Rod Serling passed away 35 years ago, his landmark five-year television series still sets the bar for small-screen genre anthologies — a true testament to the craftsmanship and continued social relevancy of the show.

"Many of the things Rod wrote about 50 years ago in *The Twilight Zone* addressed issues that are still here today, such as discrimination, paranoia, conformity and prejudice," observes Carol Serling, Rod's widow and the editor of the new anthology *More Stories from the Twilight Zone*.

Drawing on her husband's impeccable legacy, this thick collection of short fiction, featuring modern genre authors such as Loren D. Estleman, Norman Spinrad and PS Publishing founder Peter Crowther, looks to update the tales of paranoia, social justice and ironic retribution at which *The Twilight Zone* writers excelled. And few would be better at judging that aesthetic than Carol, who was not only the publishing editor of *The Twilight Zone Magazine* in the mid-1980s, but also an early sounding board for many of Rod's fiction and scripts.

"I read everything he wrote and was his toughest critic," she acknowledges. "When he wrote something that he thought was pretty good, he'd come running in from his office in the backyard and read it to me. Sometimes I would give him editing suggestions or let him know when something in particular didn't work. He didn't like criticism, but he listened to me sometimes."

More Stories from the Twilight Zone follows *Twilight Zone: 19 Original Stories on the 50th Anniversary*, which was released last fall. For this new anthology, Carol compiled another nineteen tales in the style of the beloved show, bracketed by monologues written as though they were delivered by Rod himself.

While the story conventions are familiar, the subjects have shifted to play off more modern anxieties, such as technology, escape, morality and — perhaps inspired by Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* — secret histories, as evidenced in the World War II time-travel story "Reversible Fortune" (by Rod's older brother, the late Robert Serling) and Douglas Brode's revisiting of the Alamo in "The Idea of Texas."

"These new stories are harder, they're tougher," Carol says, though she is quick to note several entries that she feels particularly reflect her husband's sensibilities and bound-

less grasp of the fantastic. Among them, Kristine Kathryn Rusch's sentimental holiday tale "The Last Christmas Letter," David Gerrold's dark satire of the bureaucracy of government death squads in "Sales of a Deathman" and veteran writer John Farris' precautionary apocalypse tale "Earthfall" most closely resemble *The Twilight Zone* of old.

As with the earlier volume, this new collection also contains a previously unpublished story by Rod, a short sports piece called "An Odyssey, or Whatever You Call It," which Carol describes as a tale that shows "there's no limit to a man's inner hopes, dreams and imagination."

These days, managing her husband's literary legacy has become a business for Carol, who has several other projects on the go, including a line of graphic novels and the multi-volume book series *As Timeless As Infinity: The Complete Twilight Zone Scripts of Rod Serling*. There's also the possibility of a new Hollywood movie that would expand an earlier *Twilight Zone* episode to a feature-length film.

"Every year I think there won't be any more requests, and then people come to me and want to do something new," she remarks. "No one would be more surprised than Rod; he thought it would all go away. He enjoyed working on *The Twilight Zone*, particularly in the beginning because it was so easy, but I think he felt some of his other television work was more important. ... Rod really felt television owed people more than just entertainment, it should also educate and illuminate. *More Stories from the Twilight Zone* has some of that, but it also has a wonderfully entertaining part — fun, interesting stories that you don't want to stop reading." ☺

MORE STORIES FROM THE

Twilight Zone

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LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED

BEHIND THE WICKED WORDS

Writing may be a solitary profession, but increasingly authors are sharing their lives online. In the days before the internet – remember those? – I wondered about the people behind the stories. Sure, writers did interviews, and even occasionally wrote books about their craft (e.g. Stephen King's *On Writing*), but for the true genre lit geek, there just wasn't enough out there – it was nothing like with actors and filmmakers. Then the internet changed that – and gave us something even better: authors in their own words, writing about writing, writing about their lives. Everything you ever wanted to know – and more – at your fingertips. Allow me to share some of my favourites.

First stop, Storytellersunplugged.com, which keeps me coming back for its vast array of voices and open guidelines. You get everything from publishing news, to personal stories about choosing subject matter, to industry advice – by horror authors! Absolutely indispensable.

For single-author blogs, Neil Gaiman's (journal.neilgaiman.com) sets the high watermark. He's been doing the online thing for years, so it's no surprise he's one of the best at offering the public a peek into the life (and deadliness) of a best-selling genre scribe. This is it, the real thing, no illusions.

Other horror authors with blogs worth checkin' out – meaning they update regularly and use them for more than blatant self-promotion – include Norman Partridge's nostalgic americanfrankenstein.blogspot.com, where he reflects upon his monster kid past; Gemma Files' handi-darling journal.gemmafiles.com and Chesie Priest's chiesepriest.com, which both detail the day-to-day triumphs and struggles of writing for a living; and Jay Lake's jake.com/blog, where he's been discussing his ongoing battle with cancer and how his illness has affected his work.

When I was a kid I had all these really lousy (read: completely incorrect) ideas about what being a horror writer meant, but these blogs speak to the reality of it: it may be a cool job, but life still happens, in all its painful messiness. Then again, writing what hurts sometimes makes for the best scares, and being invited into these authors' lives via their personal journals has only granted me a fuller appreciation of their work.

Lastly, if you can hunt them down, the out-of-print *Sympathy for the Devil* and *Running with the Devil* books collect Brian Keene's no-longer-online blog entries from the early part of his career and give a candid, often hilarious, trials-and-tribulations look at the world of horror fiction, from the insanity of conventions, to weird fan experiences, to brutally honest rants about the business itself.

Whether you're looking to enrich your reading experience or get some tips of the trade, many of your favourite authors are just a click away...

MONICA S. KUEBLER

A BOOK OF TONGUES

Gemma Files
ChZine Publications

Graced with an absolutely beautiful cover by designer Erik Moht, Gemma Files' first novel, *A Book of Tongues*, is a "weird West" tale set in 1867. It tells the story of Pinkerton detective Ed Morrow, who is sent to infiltrate a brutal gang of outlaws led by the Reverend Asher Rook, ex-Confederate chaplain and dark magician, in order to learn more about Rook's strange abilities for the government cause. Morrow becomes increasingly entangled in Rook's world – one of sorcery, gods, visions and blood – and his only hope of escape, or of completing his task, lies with Rook's lover, Chess Pargeler, a violent man with a bloody past and, if Rook has his way, a dreadful future.

Files' poetic prose is pitch-perfect, languid, precise and full of dark imagery. While the plot is sedately paced, the author takes the time to build up the universe in which her characters exist: a pitiless world in which death and destruction are commonplace, loyalties are always shifting and magic flows through every aspect like a kind of perverse electricity, with the potential to destroy anything it touches. Files' characters are complicated and profound, motivated largely by lust, both for power and for Chess Pargeler, who becomes a catalytic figure for Morrow and his quest when the two begin an affair. The sexuality of the three central players is as violent as their lives in the desert, the pioneer towns and the slums of San Francisco, and underscores not only their marginalization but their power to destabilize the world they live in – whether through magic or by their very existence.

It's a brooding and deeply sinister novel, which will undoubtedly be a challenging read for some, but Files has definitely managed to create a world complex enough to sustain the series that this book inhabits. *A Book of Tongues* closes, if not quite with a cliffhanger ending, with a revelation that sets up the reader for the events of a sequel, the upcoming *A Rope of Thorns*; it will be intriguing to see where the twists and coils of Files' imagination take us next.

JUSTINE WARWICK

LITERARY REMAINS

R.B. Russell
PS Publishing

It is hard to describe the ten stories in *Literary Remains* as "horror," yet it is equally difficult to describe them as anything else. Let's put it this way: if you like your frights blunt and messy you should look elsewhere, as Russell's distorted realities will bore you to tears. But if you want to be perplexed and unsettled... well, read on.

What Russell does – and he does it well – is exploit a unique brand of dread. As with his 2009 debut collection, *Putting the Pieces in Place*, each story in *Literary Remains* explores unreliable perception: the subversion of the senses and the convulsion of subjective experience. The effect might be termed "subjective horror," as it provides an exploration of what happens when we can no longer trust ourselves.

A prime example is "A Revelation," in which a city worker visits the home of a furtive old woman to survey for repairs. Hesitant to even let him inside the house, she refuses him entry into the padlocked attic, which we are led to believe might contain the body of her dead husband. What the narrator eventually finds there is much stranger – something that leaves him questioning what he saw and grappling with its bizarre meaning. Russell builds his situations carefully so that, when it happens, the word becomes oddly plausible.

Most of the stories are about people who find themselves in circumstances that are increasingly distressing. In "Literary Remains" and "Another Country," the protagonists visit the homes of authors: in the former, a deceased writer of cult status, and in the latter, an Eastern European who finds himself on the best-seller list. Both tales hinge on situations slowly going amiss, as the narrators are drawn ever further from their comfort zones, into the dens of the writers – the land of anxiety.

"Una Furtiva Lagrima" features a woman troubled by the ghosts of children she may or may not have murdered, and, in a way, this haunted woman sums up Russell's whole collection perfectly when she asserts, "We're all prisoners of our own mind. We all see the world differently, individually. What you see here, right now, is not necessarily what I see." After all, if she is right, then the possibilities for horror are endless – and, just like *Literary Remains*, terrifying.

BRIAN J. SHOWERS



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TRAVELOGUE OF TERROR

BEYOND THE USUAL COLLECTION OF PROPHETIC WORDS: VICTORIAN BELL

HIGGINS ARMORY MUSEUM — WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

BY GREGORY PELLUS



Horpy claws, gargoyle skeletons and stuffed yobs are just some of the fascinating specimens collected over the years by Professor Rufus Excalibur Bell, the Higgins Armory Museum's Curator of Canosites, and Benjamin, his backpack-wearing assistant. Now, for the first time, the museum has flung open the doors of his study to allow the public to gawk into the abyss of time and space. If this story sounds improbable, that's because it is.

Professor Bell's exhibition, running all year at the Higgins Armory Museum in Worcester, MA, is actually the work of artist and sculptor Hilary Scott, who created more than 100 objects for the installation, with another fifteen recently added.

Upon entering Prof. Bell's second floor study, visitors are transported into a realm of

the mythological, the magical and the just plain odd. Bell, as the story goes, hasn't returned to the museum since he went on walkabout in the 1930s, but before vanishing, he managed to convert his enormous two-room laboratory (a roughly 1000 sq. foot space) into a cryptozoological menagerie.

Visitors will be struck by the ordered chaos of this red-painted Victorian lair. The exhibit is designed to be explored in a non-linear fashion, with some items meant to be touched, while others are just for viewing. Several leather chairs enable guests to sit and read from the works of mythology and horror that are strewn about the room, which is ringed by four or five bookshelves stuffed with forbidden tomes. In essence, the Professor's office looks like a library ripped from the pages of a Lovecraft story.

While glancing at the glass-covered shelves, one might find a tiny leather volume of "Things that Bleed and Crawl" next to a book labelled with an ancient yellowed tag that reads "Gift of Alster Crowley." But this is no normal book. The cover of this hefty tome is crafted from the screaming maw of a human being. Could this be the infamous *Meconomonicon*?

A few shelves down sits the Eye of Horus, the peeper of the Egyptian god that lights the underworld. Framed and mounted within a broken stone sculpture of a pharaoh, the jewelled eye stares out into the room like a beacon of glowing evil.

Tired of searching the bookshelves? Then plop down in the chair at the Professor's oak desk and read from his open journal. The battered typewritten manuscript details many of Bell's explorations and how he came to collect his specimens, such as the skeleton of a miniature centaur that's displayed in a glass case next to his desk. Measuring about three-feet tall, the creature has delicate bleached bones, mounted in mid-gallop to recreate its natural state — the itinerant Bell allegedly collected this skeleton at an abandoned vineyard in Tunn, Italy. Another set of bones on display here belongs to a gargoyle that hails from Notre Dame, and looks to be part dog, part monkey, and mostly evil.

If you glance above the bookshelves, you'll see the head of the Jabberwocky, along with its infamous claws and jaws. The imposing orange-beaked creature looks like it could snap a human in two with one bite.

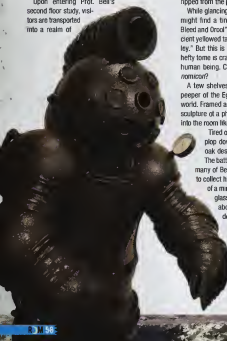
As patrons move around Bell's study, they should be sure to examine every shelf and surface because dozens of items are hidden throughout both rooms of the exhibit. In the study, for instance, one can find the parchment contract between Mephistopheles and Faust. Framed in rusty iron, the paper contract bears the telltale burn marks that characterize most deals with the Devil. A typed report below the agreement explains the legalese.

And before moving on to the next room, don't forget to eyeball the snarling, juvenile diophaus dragon from Krakow. This fire-breathing beast is cased in glass for the museum's protection. It is said that the good Professor captured this two-headed hydra before the European ban on hunting them took effect.

The second room of the exhibit is more storage facility than office. Stacked high with specimen-laden steamer trunks, stained brown boxes and old burlap sacks, it puts both the eyes and imagination to the test. Some of these containers are bound with heavy iron chains, while others have cryptic messages, such as: "Do not feed," or "Open only in moonlight," written upon them. Green tentacles dangle from one, seemingly in search of a fresh throat to strangle, but the "Keep refrigerated" note painted on a seven-foot-tall wooden crate in the corner is even more perplexing. A closer inspection reveals a frosted window and the while, sleepy-eyed head of a yob in hibernation.

Higher up, two iron shelves contain numerous unboxed specimens. A clipboard hangs from each rack, describing the items. One shelf has a special padlocked viewing box, which contains the head of Medusa and is positioned out of reach to prevent guests from staring into the face of evil.

The scorpion tail of the Babylonian demon Pazuzu, (the force that possessed the child in *The Exorcist*), sits atop another shelf. Bigger than a human arm, its studded, armoured black tail looks as if it could disembowel a man with a single swipe. On the same shelf is a leathery Artec




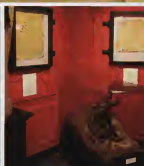
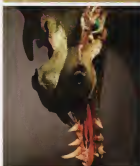
mummy and the brown, furry hoof of a Minotaur. The two-foot-tall stump looks to be part of a much, much larger monster.

It becomes evident that Bell's explorations were not limited to land, however. The Professor's hunt for Atlanteans in 1934 took him to the unfathomable depths of the ocean floor. For this adventure, Bell constructed a suit of diving armour to resist not only the ocean's pressure but also the fangs of ferocious sea monsters. He employed this black iron apparatus to capture the last pair-bonded Atlanteans, a duo of watermelon-sized parasitic monsters permanently stuck to one another.

In the centre of the storage room sits another deep-water fiend, the notorious Higgins Mermaid. Contained within a massive iron and glass soundproof aquarium, the slimy green sea creature can be spotted on a small white sand beach within the tank. A binder on the far side of the room explains that the museum learned the hard way that mermaid aquariums require soundproofing after the creature's hypnotic songs lured a docent to nearly drown himself in the tiny vat of water.

As visitors continue to make their way around the storage room, they will be struck by Professor Bell's true passion: dragon hunting (only hinted at before this with the aforementioned two-headed beastie). Stuffed reptilian wings and tails hang from every surface. The heads of a mustached, blue celestial Chinese dragon and a green snaggle-toothed wyvern from Wales adorn the rear wall. The smiling head of the three-foot-tall blue celestial makes it look almost friendly, despite its five-inch fangs and piercing yellow eyes. The wyvern looks even friendlier considering he only has three teeth, but don't be fooled. A binder beneath the head informs the reader that the wyvern once escaped from the basement and devoured Prof. Bell's first assistant. The head of a Ougadou-Bida, a legendary dragon hailing from the West African Kingdom of Ghana, rounds out this reptilian bestiary. The Bida's alligator-sized mouth is propped open so that one can stare at the rows of needle-shaped teeth.

Once visitors have finished exploring Beyond Belief, The Curious Collection of Professor Rufus Excalibur Bell runs until January 1, 2011 at the Higgins Armory Museum in Worcester, Massachusetts. The museum is located at 100 Barber Avenue, and it is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday, and most Sundays from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. The admission price is \$10 for adults and \$7 for children. Children under four-years-old get in free. For more information visit higgins.org, or call 508-853-8015. 



A Cryptomorphological Collection: (clockwise from top) A yeti expedition; \$10; "Finger Corner" costume with parchment contracts (a juvenile multi-headed dragon is displayed in the case beneath them); a bag of goblins; the door of the Professor's office; one of his dragon-hunting trophies; and (opposite) Bell's diving armour




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THE GORE-MET

MEAT: MORE MEAT FOR MANIACS

His is a favourite 'round Casa del Gore-met, and not a film I was particularly thrilled to see remade. Consequently, I paid as much attention to Tim Sullivan's *2001 Maniacs* (2005), a loose sequel to Lewis' film, as I have to just about all the other remakes and sequels of the last few years – namely none.

In retrospect, that was a mistake. Sullivan got his start in the film business on the crew of *The Deadly Spawn* (1983), one of my 50 Essential Gore Films (see *RM#83*), and he's written for horror publications, so it's not as if he's some hack music video director looking to break out. But why revisit such a relatively obscure cult classic?

"It gave me my first goregasm," says Sullivan, "an explosion that shaped my love of what I call the splatstick genre, where murder is the punchline to a very morbid joke. Looney Tunes with blood and boobies!"

2000 Maniacs is blackly funny and features Lewis' trademark mannequin-and-meat-scrapes gore effects. *2001 Maniacs* was Sullivan's tribute to that, but with little and advanced gore effects. Unfortunately, the producers pressured Sullivan to make it dark like Marcus Nispel's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003); the result is a fantastic-looking but schizophrenic film that can't decide if it is funny or scary.

Sullivan secured a new producer, more creative control and a smaller budget to make the follow-up, *2001 Maniacs: Field of Screams* (on DVD and Blu-ray July 20 from FirstLook Studios). Granny Boone (Lin Shaye), Milk Mauden (Christa Campbell), Lester (Adam Robitel) and Hucklebilly (Ryan Fleming) return, but Sullivan was unable to get Robert Englund for Mayor Buckman, so he turned to Bill Moseley, for whom he had written a cameo, to play the character. That cameo was folded into the gleefully twisted Harper Alexander character, played this time by Skinny Puppy frontman Kevin Ogilvie (a.k.a. DfGf).

"He plays Harper more as I originally envisioned, a more mature Southern dandy," says Sullivan. "Think Rhett Butler meets David Bowie. He and I both were dear friends of Forry Acker-



2001 Maniacs: Field of Screams

Photo by Josh Williamson

man, and we spent a lot of time together during Forry's final days. I was pushing *Maniacs* into production, and one day I looked at him and it was one of those eureka moments. I think he was a little nervous about taking on such a big role, but he had just worked with Bill Moseley on *Repo*, which made him feel a lot more comfortable. ... The scene where he and Christa carve a girl in half with a buzz saw captures the essence of splatstick and Herschell Gordon Lewis more than anything else I've done."

Sullivan and Chris Kobin once again wrote the script, with assistance from Christopher Tuffin. The film opens with the local sheriff shutting down the annual Pleasant Valley Cuts 'N' Glory Jamboree, in which the ghosts of Confederate townsfolk slaughtered during the Civil War rise up to exact revenge on Northerners. One of the most iconic scenes from Lewis' film is paid glorious homage when Buckman and his bloodthirsty rebels stuff the sheriff in a barrel, hammer nails into it, then roll it down a ramp, splattering him against a Confederate flag target at the bottom. Then it's time for a road trip!

"Well, since the North ain't coming to the South, the South heads North, coming in contact with a bunch of shallow Hollywood types

filming a reality show – à la *The Simple Life* – whose interactions with the maniacs provide the core of the comedy," explains Sullivan. "This set-up really allowed us to go full throttle on the red state/blue state dynamic, and push the envelope as far as we could. Nothing's sacred in this one."

While camped in Iowa, the rebels wine, dine and serenade two vapid celebrities, their coattail riding boyfriends, the (cartoonishly stereotypical) Jewish director, an overbearing lesbian producer, and some oversexed crew members, before separating and slaughtering them for a climactic cannibalistic BBQ.

It's a consistently funny cavalcade of sexual and racial humour, liberally sprinkled with witty pop culture references and fantastically bloody set pieces. But it's the parody of American culture that resonates most.

"We really play that up in this film, completely poking fun at the way both sides marginalize and view each other," affirms Sullivan.

"And now with Obama as president, the maniacs' worst nightmare of a black man in the White House has been fully realized. So we have a lot of fun with that – and trust me, it ain't subtlet. It's smack dab in your face!"



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A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET (2010)

Steve Jablonsky

WARNER TOWNS MUSIC

After his ear-splitting scores for the *Texas Chainsaw* reboots, Steve Jablonsky integrates some classical sound into his latest work. The title theme uses a pulsing motif to capture Freddy Krueger's encroaching presence; Krueger's de facto "heartbeat" drifts from a sterile sonic environment into the melodic realm, accompanied by the faint, wailing voices of molested children. That's more or less the score's core, around which distant orchestral laments and sudden bursts of industrial shrillness swirl, echo and evaporate. Equally clever are the percussive hits that evoke the synth rhythms of David Newman's original 1984 composition. Although Jablonsky manages a good balance of orchestral samples and traditional sonic stings, a few cues bear a striking resemblance to Hans Zimmer's pastiche score for *The Ring* and *The Ring Two*, knocking this auditory redo down to a somewhat sleek but rather derivative effort. **MAY 3.5/5**



TRUE BLOOD: MUSIC FROM THE HBO ORIGINAL SERIES VOLUME 2

Various Artists

EDMUNDA

Set as it is in the sultry, vampire-ridden climes of Bon Temps, Louisiana, it's no surprise that this second soundtrack from the HBO hit series

True Blood has a taste for sex and death-obsessed blues. M. Ward's rather anemic take on Howlin' Wolf's "Howlin' for My Baby" kicks off this mostly red-blooded compilation, before Jece Everett (of *Ti* themes song "Bad Blood") channels the late bluesman on his sinister cover of the Willie Dixon-written "Evil (Is Going On)," a hit for Wolf back in 1954. Tales of mad love abound, from original shock rocker Screamin' Jay Hawkins' aptly titled 1957 hit "Frenzy" to the lycanthropic howls of Eels singer E on the psychedelic swamp rocker "Fresh Blood." Tender moments come from the Lucinda Williams/Elvie Costello belted "Kiss Like Your Kiss" and Robbie Robertson's "How to Be Calm/Invincible." As tasty as a bottle of *True Blood*, this is worth sinking your fangs into. **SP 3.5/5**



THE BRAINS Zombie Nation

Stoner

Proving there's still plenty of piss, vinegar and venom coursing through the veins of psychobilly, Montreal's premiere genre purveyors rage again on *Zombie Nation*, the group's fourth full-length album. A focused up-roaring assault, this offering is a relentless barrage of irresistible melodies wrapped around infectious, churning rockabilly rhythms. Propelled by vocalist Rene de la Muerta's wily lyrics, the songs cover the same bases fans have come to expect: life as a zombie, eternal evil, thriving in moonlight and making your victim scream. Overall, however, from bouncy opener "We'll Rise" through to a speedy version of Depeche Mode's "Enjoy the Silence," the energetic, twangy romp not only surpasses the band's previous best (last year's eponymous offering), but finds it hitting new highs without losing its inherently tongue-in-cheek grin. Added cool points: the album cover's

airborne gray matter comes courtesy of RM's own Ghoulish Gary Pullini. **IG 3.5/5**



BALZAC

The Birth of Hatred
Majestic Records

This sprawling, three-disc set is the perfect introduction for those unfamiliar with the growing out of Balzac, the Japanese band responsible for keeping the spirit of The Crimson Ghost alive in 2010. *The Birth of Hatred* is epic in scope, offering an album of new material (*Hatred*), a collection of re-recorded classics (*The Birth of Evil*) and a DVD documenting the band's history, complete with promo videos and extras. The new songs find Balzac taking more musical risks than usual, establishing themselves as a legitimate, creative force rather than yet another horror punk act suckling at the Milt's teats. The stylin' rockabilly jam of "Frankenstein's Walk" and melodic rock of "Swallow the Dark" are still an evocative homage to the

Milt's formula of 1950s drive-in horror, rockabilly and furious punk, with singalong infect, but there's an extravagance and J-rock flair to this set that proves Balzac is more than just a tribute. **GP 3.5/5**



SABBATH ASSEMBLY

Restored to One
AJNA

Need another reason to worship the Dark Lord? Sabbath Assembly is cause to convert. Like other members of the Process Church (for more info on this controversial cult, see Timothy Wytke's book *Love, Sex, Fear, Death: The Inside Story of the Process Church of the First Judgement*), the band worships Satan and Christ as fundamental forces governing the universe. Rewriting Process hymns with a psychedelic edge, *Restored to One* is a consecration for your stereo. Led by a laser-metallic, more rapturous Jex Thoth (of her eponymous doom outfit), the band's quasi-gospel/rock sound is filled out by underground stalwarts Kevin Rutmanis (Melvins, Tomahawks)

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HARLEY POE

Wretched. Filthy. Ugly.

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Though *Wretched Filthy Ugly's* "It's Only the End of the World" on Rue Morgue Radio's Hymns camp got us jonesing for more of Harley Poe's really fun, horror-flecked tunes, nothing prepared us for this rollicking hootenanny of hollers and handclapping! Yes, this album actually rollicks! Warm organs, sleazy drum beats and plucky guitar strummin' frame singer Joe Whiteford's contagiously enthusiastic, quivering sneer. His obscenity-laced wit is sharper than the business end of the Grim Reaper's scythe as he leads his merry band through a frantic run of upbeat numbers about possessed women ("Mama"), sitting on a priest's doorstep, charming orphans and being just plain mean ("Jembo"). There's also an ode to vampires and blowpops ("Suckers") that has to be heard to be believed. Peppered with samples from flicks such as *Satan's Cheerleaders* and *The Monster of Camp Sunshine*, Harley Poe is a bit of a one-trick pony but, damn, if that little ass ain't the life of the party! **TT 3.5/5**



the BLOOD SPATTERED GUIDE

JOHNETTE NAPOLITANO RISES AGAIN

"Oh, you were a vampire and baby,
I'm the walking dead."

CONCRETE BLONDE

MANY NEW MOONS BEFORE TWILIGHT, THERE WAS ANOTHER polarizing vamp film: remember the communal whine about Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise starring in *Interview with the Vampire*? In hindsight, it wasn't the worst casting choice in vampire film history (Keanu Reeves as Jonathan Harker, anyone?) and the 1994 movie turned a whole new generation on to Anne's Rice's famed 1970s fang chronicles. For me, though, the introduction to Rice's work came by way of an album by LA band Concrete Blonde.

Released in 1990, *Bloodletting* dripped Southern Gothic atmosphere, right from the prowling bassline of lead track "Bloodletting (The Vampire Song)," a menacing number as much about the city of New Orleans as any bloodsucker from Rice's pages.

"We were on our first tour, with Cyndi Lauper, and our first stop was New Orleans," recalls singer/bassist Johnette Napolitano of the song's origins. "I completely fell in love. I would go back there on breaks, just to soak it in. That's when I was reading Anne's books, and she captured it so well. You can feel all that lace and velvet and candlelight — I was so into it. And metaphorically, that's what I was going through at that time. I felt the life was being sucked out of me."

For listeners like me, *Bloodletting* was the unofficial soundtrack to reading those novels, bringing the sophisticated savagery of Rice's vampires and the decadent French Quarter to life. Napolitano became a pop star with the album's hit single "Joey," but she was a snarling femme fatale who vamped it up on the rest of the record, including the agitated "The Sky Is a Poisonous Garden," and swampy "The Darkening of the Light." There would be a few other Concrete Blonde albums, along with break-ups, reunions and side projects, but *Bloodletting* remains the band's masterpiece.

This year, to celebrate the record's 20th anniversary, Concrete Blonde is reforming for the Vampire's Rise summer tour and a special-edition reissue is out this month from Shout! Factory. Here's hoping a new generation will discover one of the best vampire songs of all time, written by an artist with a genuine fascination with the supernatural.

"Do I really believe there are vampires and they suck people's blood? Yeah," says Napolitano. "Do I believe they need to? No. Do I believe in psychic vampires? You better believe it. Do I believe in using a lot of protection? Yes, and everybody needs it, believe me."

JOSS LADONCE

and producer Randall Dunn (Sunn O))), Earth). Thoth's thunderous voice flows over the organ-laced interludes of "The Saints Shall Inherit the Earth" and as she croons to Lucifer and Jehovah in tandem, sweetly signalling the fires of armageddon in "Glory Hallelujah." Hauntingly addictive, this album will save your soul.

JS 3.5/5.5



DV HELL

The Underworld Regime

Phosphoric Records

Folled by the courts in their bid to take control of adored black metal band Dv Hell, ex-bassist King of Hell and ex-vocalist Ghael assembled a supergroup called God Seed — which included 1349 guitarist Teloch, Enslaved guitarist Ice Dale and Satyricon drummer Frost — to record their debut album (though Ghael left before recording even began to pursue an interest in women's fashion design). Dimmu Borgir frontman Shagrath stepped in to provide lyrics and vocals, and the band was christened Ov Hell. The result is a wonderfully evil-sounding yet accessible slab of old-school black metal. Lyrically, Shagrath tackles subject matter beyond the requisite anti-Christian themes, including tales of ghosts ("Ghosting"), witches ("Acts of Sin") and demons ("David's Harlot," "Invoker"), and the album is neatly tied together with hair-raising sonic pastiches of demonic gurgling, howling wolves and licking flames. Scansetters are predictably deriding this record for its perceived commercial aspirations, but even Satanists have to eat. GM 3.5/5.5



HOODED MENACE

Never Cross the Dead

Phosphoric Lore

Finnish doom-mongers Hooded Menace dropped a ten-ton bombstone on

horror metal with their 2008 debut *Fulfill the Curse*, a crushing dose of early Candlemass and Cathedral-style riffage based upon the undead templar knights of the Spanish Tombs of the *Blind Dead* series. On follow-up *Never Cross the Dead*, they've raised the crossbones both musically and atmospherically through the use of mega-heavy, snail-paced stoner riffs coupled with the lowest, sepulchral vocals you're likely to hear. But this time they've also concentrated on bringing some added melodies to the forefront, making for a richer, creepier sound. The molasses-like carnage serves not only as a soundtrack to the *Blind Dead* films, but there are also tracks paying tribute to Hammer Studios ("House of Hammer") and '70s sex-horror classic *Vampires* ("From Their Coffined Slumber"), complete with nods to cast and crew. Beautifully packaged with outstanding artwork, *Never Cross the Dead* comes highly recommended for the doom and Euro-horror sets. AVL 3.5/5.5



RAMMER

12" EP

Schizophrenic Records

If Audio Drome was scratch and sniff, this review of RAMMER's posthumous 12" EP would reek like death! The underappreciated Toronto quintet's last gasp features only three cuts of deliciously bone-dry, late '80s-style thrash, but it's a leather- and denim-wrapped sucker punch you're going to want to hit yourself with over and over again. The band is tight as fuck and singer Davis Kristiansen anemur like a gargyle hanging off the drum kit as the players muscle through a rendition of Låz Rockit's "Leatherface" (from the movie *Leatherface: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre III*), a re-recorded version of their own "Ruet and Peranola" (originally featured on their 2006 full-length *Cancer*) and "Otherworldly Resurrection," a nimble executed cut so thick it may have been executed in a tar pit. Limited to 500 copies, this gnarly nugget from beyond the grave only loses points for brevity. Make sure you get your grubby mitts on one quick. TT 3.5/5.5

DARK SHADOWS AUDIO DRAMA
The Night Whispers
REUNITES ORIGINAL CAST MEMBERS
OF THE LEGENDARY TV SHOW

THE RETURN Barnabas Collins

by JAMES BUCKRILL

THE ORIGINAL BROODING VAMPIRE SERIES IS BACK. The legacy of the nearly 45-year-old gothic TV drama *Dark Shadows* continues with the release of *The Night Whispers*, an audio drama that its writer/producer sees as a natural extension of the long-running show.

"*Dark Shadows* was almost a radio show in essence," explains Stuart Manning. "It was made in a small studio with quite limited resources. It was very much driven by sound – music and sound effects, like the ever-present thunderstorms and crashing waves. *Dark Shadows* was also a suspense show and in some respects there's a whole level of suspense added to the drama because you don't have visuals."

Debuting in June 1966, *Dark Shadows* was a spooky soap opera that aired weekday afternoons and garnered a legion of fans. Yet the half-hour TV program wasn't an initial success. It was close to cancellation during its first season when creator/producer/director Dan Curtis (*The Night Stalker*, *TriLOGY of Terror*) figured he had nothing to lose by introducing a guilt-ridden 175-year-old vampire named Barnabas Collins (Jonathan-borne stage actor Jonathan Frid) to the show. Ratings soared and audiences soon found themselves watching storylines about ghosts, witches, warlocks, werewolves and man-made beings, before the series ended its 1,225 episode run in April 1971. Two feature films, *House of Dark Shadows* (1970) and *Night of Dark Shadows* (1971) were spawned, and in 1991 the series was given a prime-time reboot on NBC that was cancelled after just two months.

Fans would have to wait another fifteen years for new stories featuring *Dark Shadows'* offbeat, darkly romanticized world and colourful cast of characters. In 2006, Big Finish Productions – a British company best known for its *Doctor Who* audio plays – launched its series of original *Dark Shadows* audio dramas and dramatic readings, which now number over a dozen.

The latest instalment, *The Night Whispers* offers something *Dark Shadows* fans have been waiting a long time for: the return of Frid. In the new 45-minute episode, Barnabas – now released from his vampire curse and

settled into a new life – is being haunted anew by a spirit, possibly from his past. The project marks the first time that the 85-year-old actor, who no longer gives interviews, has performed as the character since the end of the series' original run.

"When we began making these audio dramas four years ago, I never really thought that we'd work with Jonathan," admits Manning. "At the time, he was retired and was no longer attending the *Dark Shadows* festivals.

Then he reconnected with some of the actors and fans and started to attend the annual convention [again], which he's done for the last three years now."

Dark Shadows marketing and festival director Jim Pierson suggested that the audio dramas might be something the actor would like to get involved with; it turns out that he did. In addition to Frid, *The Night Whispers* features co-star John Karlen reprising his role as Barnabas' reluctant servant Willie Loomis, as well as Barbara Steele, who played Dr. Julia Hoffman in the 1991 redux. But Steele doesn't reprise the role of Dr. Hoffman in this project, she plays Celeste, a previously unknown woman from Barnabas' past.

"I love Barbara Steele and she has this amazing, unmistakable voice," says Manning. "She's truly brilliant. It's a very crucial role and very memorable. Originally, it wasn't written necessarily with Barbara in mind...but we felt that it would be great to do something really special with this role."

The *Dark Shadows* CDs have been well received among fans and critics, and this year is shaping up to be the busiest yet for Big Finish, which has nine *DS* productions slated for release, including an ambitious four-CD box set titled *Kingdom of the Dead*, out this month.

With news that Tim Burton has plotted a big-screen adaptation as his next project, with frequent collaborator Johnny Depp in the role of Barnabas Collins, it seems the timing couldn't be better for further expanding the *Dark Shadows* universe.

"We're telling interesting new stories," says Manning, "and to the fans who follow these characters, the chance to hear them live and breathe again is quite irresistible." ☼



PLAY DEAD

GRAPHICS ▲▲

PLAYABILITY ▲▲

SHIVERS ▲▲

GAMES REVIEWED BY ANDREW LEE
WHAKEY TRYING IS THRILL



ALAN WAKE

PC, Xbox 360
Remedy Entertainment

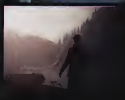
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Alan Wake is a famous crime writer with a big problem. Aside from horrible writer's block, which has plagued him for the past two years, he's living in a nightmare from which he can't wake.

Players assume the role of the titular scribe who, while vacationing in the Washington state countryside, has his world rocked after his wife is kidnapped and he finds himself hunted by characters from a book he supposedly penned but doesn't remember writing.

From the creators of *Max Payne*, and reminiscent of the *Silent Hill* series, this very dark, third-person shooter's striking scenery and evocative storyline are sure to appeal to fans of *Twist Peaks*, *The X-Files* and the works of Stephen King. Search the dreary, photo-realistic settings—which include a lighthouse, an abandoned cabin and a fog-shrouded logging camp—for clues to your beloved's whereabouts. With your field of view restricted to what your flashlight can illuminate, the game has a remarkably sinister atmosphere. You'll want to collect batteries for that precious lantern too, which doubles as a blunt object to ward off the area's residents, who have been collectively possessed by a dark entity intent on liberating your head from your shoulders. Though the townies are armed with bloodsoaked axes, revving chainsaws and gleaming sickles, a few well-placed rounds from your gun will send them to Hades. That's easier said than done, though, when they're ambushing you nearly every step of the way.

Alan Wake's compelling storyline and nightmare-inducing scares will hook you until the final reveal. Night light anyone?



SHERLOCK HOLMES VS. JACK THE RIPPER

PC, Xbox 360
Dreamcatcher

▲▲
▲▲
▲▲

The streets of London are once again dripping with blood in a game that pits the most famous fictional detective against one of the most brutal killers of all time. Set in the summer of 1888, it sees players adopt the roles of Sherlock Holmes and his trusty aide Dr. Watson in an attempt to solve the Whitechapel murders by visiting the crime scenes, examining corpses and combing through reams of interviews and documents gathered during the investigation.

Unfortunately, though, much of your time is spent on side missions that detract from the flow of the game. For example, you're forced to solve puzzles that involve reassembling torn documents or helping ancillary characters with such mundane chores as finding lost folders in order for the game to progress. Dated graphics, stilted voice acting and very few scares might have you slinking back to 221B Baker Street to play *Left 4 Dead* instead.



ZOMBIE INFECTION

iPhone app
Gameloft

▲▲
▲▲
▲▲

Zombies have been appearing in iPhone apps quicker than you can say "Trixie." This new title from Gameloft has players traveling to South America to uncover the reasons behind an escalating undead apocalypse. Utilizing a user-friendly virtual control stick to move and a tappable "fire" button to riddle the deadites with lead, players must traverse twelve levels of well-rendered locales, including a zoo and a mine. Although you can kill zombies and their undead animal cohorts with a single headshot, you can also blow their limbs off with an impressive array of handguns, machine guns and rocket launchers. There's even an assortment of katanas and shurikens at your disposal, if you feel like slicing and dicing the shufflers into piles of gruesome sushi instead.

This is a fun, action-packed game that'll remind you that when there's no more room on your laptop, the dead will walk on your iPhone.



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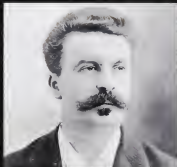
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CLASSIC CUT

"THE HORLA"

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

FRANCE - 1887



Toward the end of the 19th century, supernatural writers began to apply a more realistic and modern approach to the venerable genre. Instead of writing about rattling chains and old castles, as favoured by horror's Gothic roots, they began examining the often-unreliable realities of subjective perception.

In 1887 French writer Guy de Maupassant (1859-1893) published his terrifying tour de force "The Horla." H.P. Lovecraft described the short story as a "ferce narrative [without] peer in its particular department," while genre scholar E.F. Bleiler believed it to be "one of the classics of psychopathology." Since its initial publication, "The Horla" has become a favourite amongst anthologists, making it the best known of Maupassant's macabre tales.

The central plot of "The Horla" concerns an intelligent, invisible non-human entity, but also offers up elements of mesmerism, psychic vampirism and existential terror. The story is told as a sequence of diary entries written by an unnamed narrator. In the first entry we are introduced to an idyllic scene and a declaration of *joie de vivre*, as the narrator watches ships drift along Paris' river Seine. He ponders the limitations of his "wretched senses...which are incapable of perceiving things that are too small, things that are too big." These musings lead to the onset of depression, which escalates when our protagonist begins to experience sensations of imminent disaster. The narrator questions his faculties and gradually comes to believe that an invisible entity inhabits his home. He soon realizes he is a prisoner, his thoughts and actions dominated by an unseen tormentor: the Horla.

Domination of human will features heavily into the tale. Hypnotism had a popular resurgence during the late 19th century and Maupassant was known to have attended public demonstrations of the procedure given by neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot. The Victorian fascination with hypnotism had far-reaching effects in the literary world, and notably springs up again in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).

Yet, "The Horla" is a singular piece of work. Aside from the general influence of Maupassant's mentor Gustave Flaubert (a novelist who adhered to the style of literary realism), it is difficult to pinpoint definite forerunners. Fitz-James O'Brien's classic 1859 story "What Was It?" is a notable pre-

cursor that explores the idea of an invisible non-human entity in a similar fashion, but it is not known if Maupassant was familiar with the tale.

The real inspiration for "The Horla" may not be literary at all. The story is obsessed with the limited reliability of human perception and the fragility of the mind. Many critics link the narrator's psychosis with Maupassant's fears of impending madness; some even go so far as to make the erroneous claim that the writer was wholly insane by the time he wrote the tale. "[Maupassant] wrote, not as a psychotic," clarifies scholar Arnold Kettle, "but as a man approaching the frontiers of madness, terrified at the prospect of losing his reason."

During his twenties, Maupassant contracted syphilis and his health was in decline for the remainder of his life. Less than five years after writing "The Horla," he fully lost control of his mind. In January 1892, he attempted suicide by cutting his throat with a razor blade. Shortly thereafter he was transferred to a private asylum in Paris, where he died on July 6, 1893.

As one of the first popular horror stories to explore the idea of subjective perception, "The Horla" effectively paved the way for more tales of that ilk. Ambrose Bierce's celebrated story "The Damned Thing" (1898), which also explores limited perception, was surely influenced by Maupassant. Like the Horla, the Damned Thing is an entity invisible to the human eye. "The Horla" also inspired Lovecraft, who, as previously indicated, was an admirer of the tale. "The Dunwich Horror" (1929) and "The Shunned House" (1937) both use the invisible monster motif, as well. More significantly, Lovecraft employed the notion of non-human entities dominating humanity in his most notable stories, including "The Call of Cthulhu" (1928) which includes passages similar to those found in "The Horla." And in modern genre film and fiction, it's become an even more commonly used plot device, with no shortage of tales featuring unseen entities stalking hapless victims, who suddenly find themselves questioning their sanity as a result.

"The Horla" has left an indelible mark on weird fiction, for not only is it a memorable, influential horror story, but Maupassant's vivid descriptions of a solitary descent into madness make this tale of terror truly timeless.

BRIAN J. SHOWERS

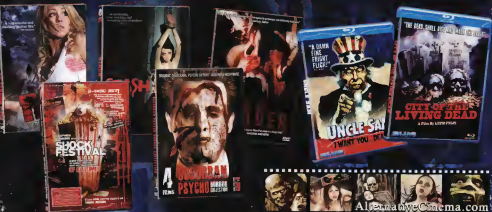
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